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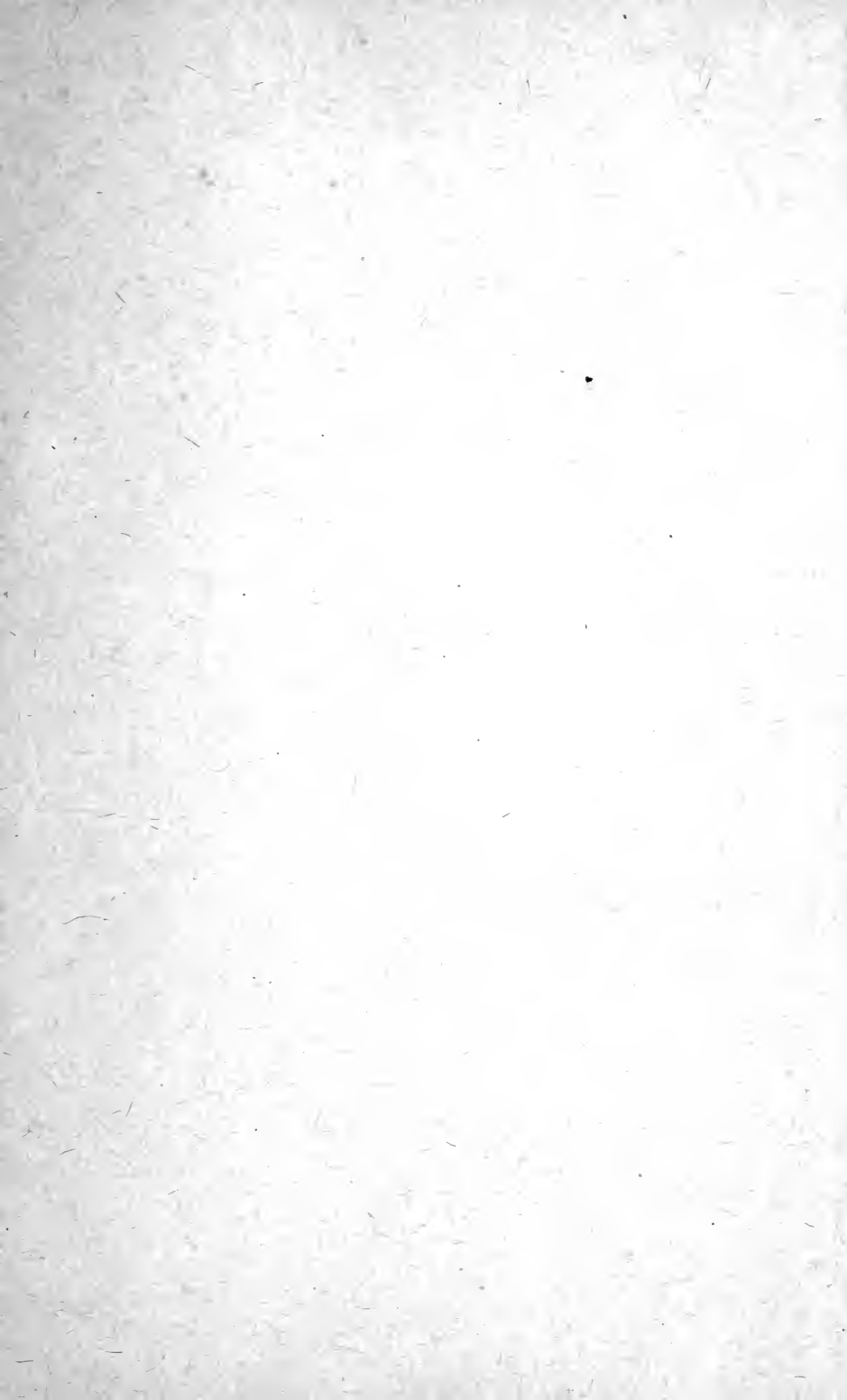
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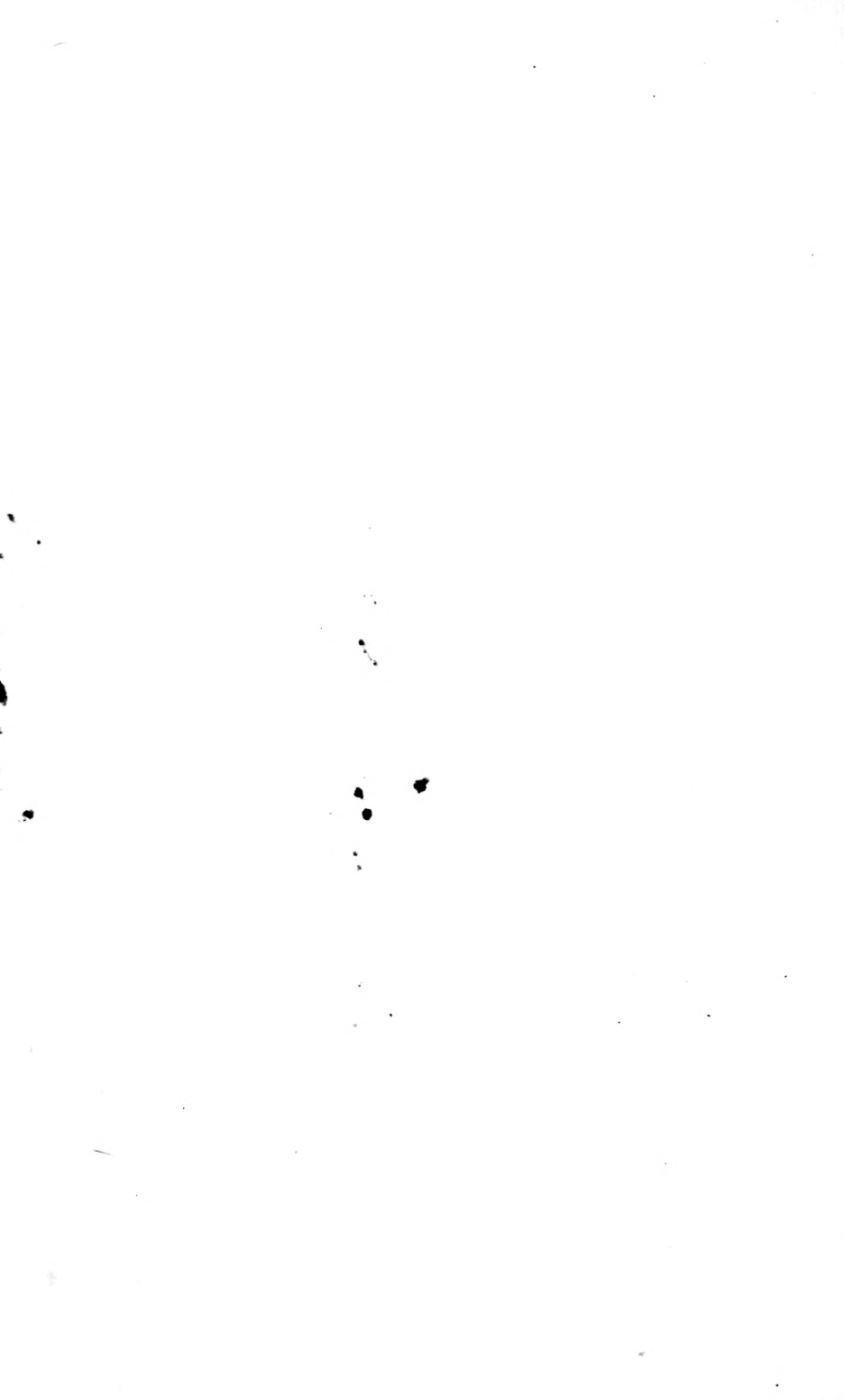
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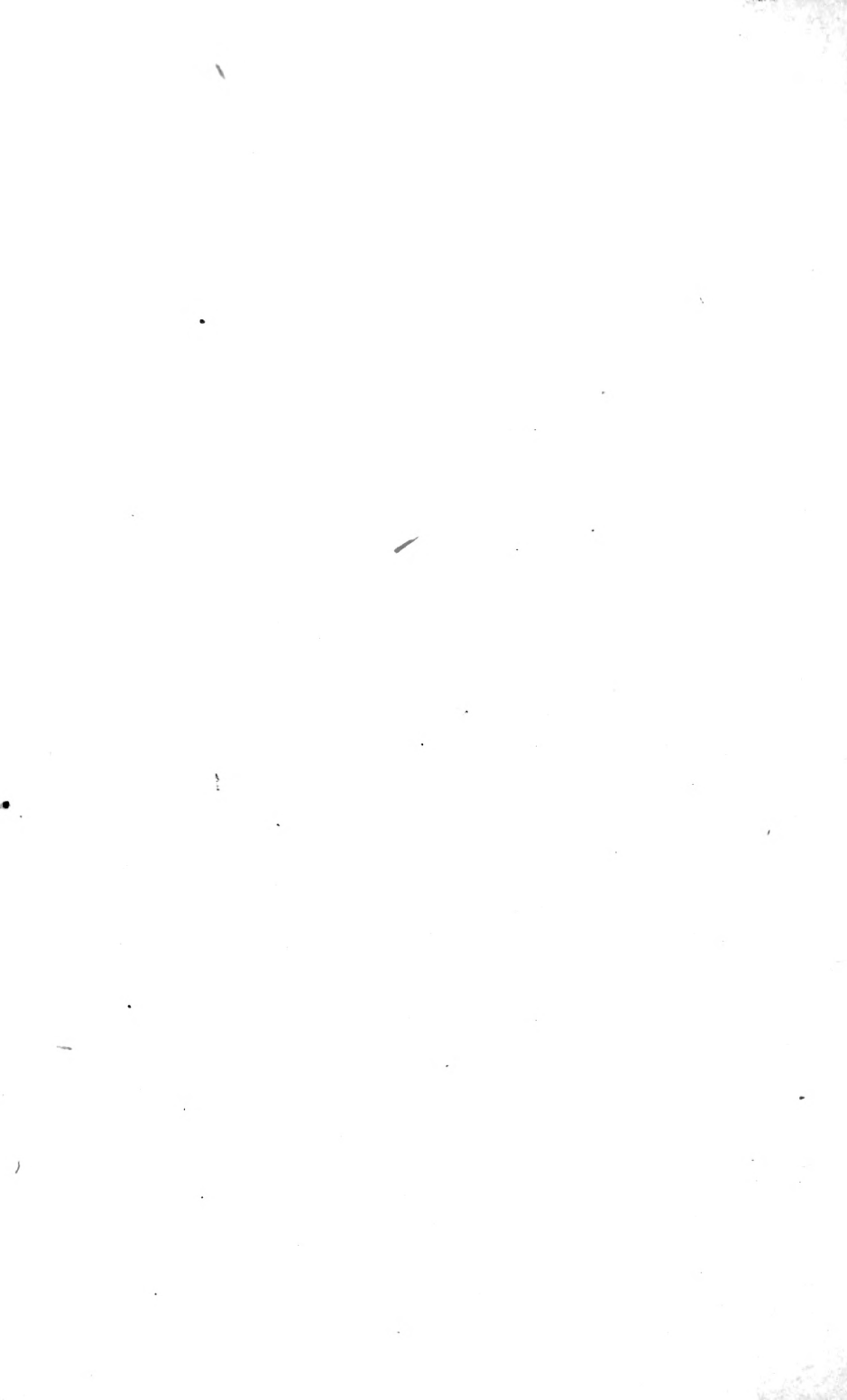
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PRACTICAL TALKS

WITH

SINNERS, INQUIRERS, AND CHRISTIANS.

Mc
BY S. McBETH.

1872

ST. LOUIS:

J. W. McINTYRE,
BOOKSELLER AND STATIONER,
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PREFACE.

THE following sketches are true stories. They have been selected, from among a great many similar cases, as illustrations of the different methods which the writer proved,—in three years of spiritual labor in the hospitals, among the soldiers of both armies, and in years of experience elsewhere,—to be the most successful, in dealing with each of the classes described.

The need, very deeply felt in her own work, of some such simple, practical, printed talks, to put into the hands of those with whom she labored, first suggested the idea of sending out the sketches in this form (and, if demanded, separately), in the hope that they might be of use to others.

The spiritual classes described are not peculiar

to any social class. They are to be found in every rank and condition of life. The same difficulties and errors exist in human hearts all around us. If the Sketches should be the means, in God's hand, of awakening one careless soul, or comforting a troubled Christian; of leading one self-deceiver to forsake his "refuge of lies," and build upon the "Rock of Ages;" or of helping one inquiring soul to find the Saviour,—they will have accomplished the end for which they were written, by

THE AUTHOR.

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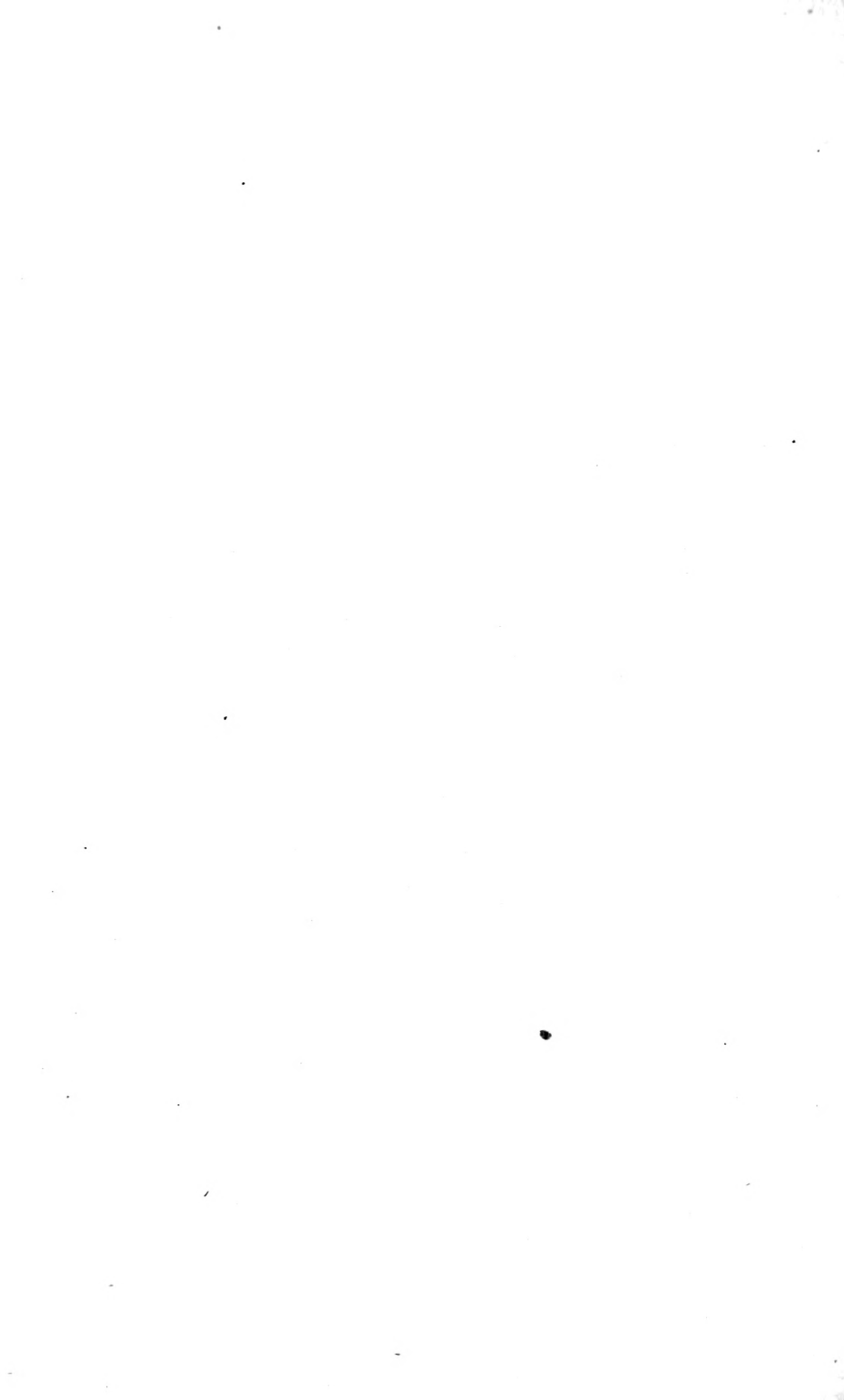
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THE INFIDEL.



THE INFIDEL.

"IF I am not very much mistaken, this is the lady that told me I was an infidel."

"I, friend? When did I tell you that?"

I had noticed him standing near me, as I talked with ——, one evening, but, simply glancing at him as I came up to them, I had taken him for a stranger. Even now, after a good look into the intelligent, manly face before me, I failed to recognize it.

"Where did I see you before? I do not remember."

"Over in Ward No. 9, some months ago. I was sitting by the library, twice, when you came up to it to put some letter-paper and envelopes for the boys, in the box, and both times you had a long talk with me. The first

time, there was a gentleman with you, and when he offered me some of his tracts, I wouldn't take them. I told him they might do for children or weak-minded persons, but I had too strong a mind to believe in any such stuff."

"Oh, are you the one? You have changed a great deal. Where have you been since then? I often wondered what had become of you?"

"They put me on duty in one of the kitchens, and I could not see you after that; but I knew you the minute you stood beside me to-night, and I have not forgotten one word you said to me."

"What did I say to you, friend? I have forgotten,—I talk to so many. Sit down on this bench (I am tired), and tell me."

"I was reading 'Nelson on Infidelity,' the first time when you came up, and after the gentleman went away you looked at it, and asked me if I *needed* to read such a book as that. I told you that I was only reading it to pass away the time; that I didn't believe in

such stuff as he wrote. You said that it did not make the least difference in the *truth*, whether I believed it or not. My *thinking* any thing was not true, did not make it so. I might *really think* (if I was 'colour-blind') that the little red book you had in your hand was green, but my thinking so would not change its colour. I might really believe that I would never die, but death would come to me just as surely for all that. I might believe that there was no God, no heaven, no hell; but my thinking so would not blot them out. God's laws were just as binding on me all the time, and everywhere, as if I acknowledged them. Heaven or hell was waiting for me all the same, whether I ever thought of them or not. You said, too, that I need not tell you that I did not believe the Bible, for I did. I was only *trying* to think it was not true because I *wished* it was not; I did not want to acknowledge God's claim on *me*; that my infidel creed did not satisfy me, and never would, even if I could believe it.

"I did not like to be called an infidel, but

it was the true name for me. I had been a very wicked boy, and I knew it, and I did not like to think I should be called to account for it, and so I tried hard to persuade myself that there was no God, no heaven, no hell; and I had almost got to believe it, when you came to me that day."

"But you think differently now?" (Something in his face and tone told me he was changed.)

"Yes, *very differently*," he said, earnestly. "You said," he continued, "'Even according to your boasted 'reason,' it is the part of a wise man to be on the safe side. If your creed is true (as it is *not*), the Christian will be equal gainer with you at death; but if the Christian's creed be true (as you *know* it is), *he* gains all then, and you lose all.'

"The last time, after you had talked with me nearly an hour, as you rose to leave, you said, 'Don't run any risks in this matter, friend; your soul is too precious for that. If you had a dozen souls, you might trifle with one, or even lose it, and still have eleven left;

but one soul is *your all*, and if you lose that, it is lost forever. Don't make any mistakes, either; for if you do, you cannot come back to this world and make it all right again. If, when you come to the end of the road, you find you have taken the wrong one, it is too late to turn into the right one then. A mistake here costs you your soul for eternity.'"

"So, you have remembered well. What then?"

"The words kept following me wherever I went, for a long time," he said; "and then the Rev. Mr. B. got hold of me, and took me to the prayer-meeting. I never felt so in my life. Something—I could not tell what it was—kept urging me to get up and tell how I felt; and as one after another of the boys rose for prayers, I could almost hear the words, 'Get up, and ask them to pray for you too.' I caught myself almost looking round, once or twice, to see who spoke them."

"The voice was in your heart, friend: it was God's Spirit striving with you."

"Yes; but I did not know it then, and so I

fought against it. I said to myself, 'Don't be such a fool, P., as to get up and ask for prayers before all the boys; they will laugh at you.' But at last I couldn't keep my seat any longer, and I just got up before that houseful, and told them all, and asked them to pray for me."

"And then—?" I said, as he paused.

"I began to pray for myself too. I *believe* in God now," he added, in a low, earnest tone, "because I have found him as my Saviour."

"Oh, thank God for that, friend! I am so glad, so *glad*! Oh, you don't know how happy that makes me!"

I could have cried for joy then that this lost soul was found; and there was "joy in heaven," too, I know, when that story was first repeated in its courts.

I found very few infidels in the hospitals,—perhaps not more than twelve or fifteen in nearly three years. I kept count to the ninth. I remember telling him, "I have spent the most of my time in hospitals for more than two years, friend, and have talked with hundreds, perhaps thousands, in that time, about

their souls, and you are the *ninth infidel* I have found among them all."

"Oh, don't call *me* an *infidel*! I am not one."

I can still see the deprecating look in the pale, intellectual face, as it half started from the pillow in horror at the thought.

"The *name* makes little difference, friend. There is where you really stand." And before I left he promised to begin to pray that night.

I do not think I could have found so few infidels among an equal number of citizens; and I think the reason of it is this. The most of these men had faced death before they came to me, and that clears away the mists and shows things in their true light. There is only one hope that death cannot strike from our grasp, then, and that is anchored on the "Rock of Ages." (I have been, twice in my life, so near the next world that I could almost *see* into it; and I *know* that this is true.) Then, too, on picket or vedette duty, on the night before the battle, or in the awful stillness which

precedes the first volley from the enemy's ranks, God's voice makes itself audible to their souls, as it does not in the busy hum and cares of home-life. They are forced to feel its truth.

It came to them in the quiet of the hospital, too. Lying among strangers, with nothing to do but to think and suffer through the long, weary nights and days, seeing their comrades carried from beside them to the "dead-house," and not knowing how soon they might follow them,—oh, these things had a very different look then.

I had a theory that *no one* could, in the quiet of a sick-bed, retain his full consciousness and go down to the brink of the grave expecting to topple into it every moment, and then come back to life again an infidel; and I have proved it to my full content. I have asked each one of those I have met, "Were you ever so sick in your life that you felt sure you were dying?" and the answer has *invariably* been, "No." "You told me," said P., "that you *knew* I had never been so sick that

I thought I was dying; and it was true. I never had."

I have never seen an infidel die. That is a strange experience for one who has looked on death so often. But I have stood beside the cots of those who were, or *tried* to be, infidels, in the camp, in the workshop, on the farm, or in the office, and have seen them when they were awake to the fact that they had played their game of life and lost, and watched them go into eternity in such horror and darkness as I pray I may never look upon again.

We shrink from the *name* of *infidel*; and yet there is too much *practical infidelity* abroad in our land, even among nominal Christians. We say that we believe in eternity; and yet we act too much as if there was no other world than this. If we *really believed* in heaven, we should try more earnestly not only to get into it ourselves, but to take our dear ones with us. If we *really believed* in hell, we should try harder not only to keep out of it ourselves, but to prevent those around us from going there. If we *really believed* that the Bible was given us as the rule of

our lives, we should consult it oftener, and strive to follow its precepts more closely. If we *really believed* what it tells us of God, he would be oftener in our thoughts, and the love of God in Christ be more fully “shed abroad” in our hearts and lives.

THE UNIVERSALIST.



THE UNIVERSALIST.

AFTER the war was ended, and when the sick and wounded who were able to travel, were being sent from the hospitals to their homes almost daily, the few patients still remaining in the eye-infirmiry of the "A" Hospital were transferred to one end of the long ward "W," which was fitted up for their use. A melodeon was placed here; and visitors used sometimes to play for the men, while they, and the convalescents from the upper part of the ward, would join in singing from the soldiers' hymn-books or the little music-books scattered freely for their use.

Going into the ward one day in company with some friends, while they and the convalescents were singing for the blind, I sat down

beside one of the wounded boys in the upper part of the ward, and began talking to him about his soul.

As we talked, a nurse, who had come with the last boat-load from the South, came up to us, and listened for a little while, and then seated himself on a cot near us.

He was a middle-aged man, whom I had not seen before. I did not know whether he was a Christian, or not; and so, in order to learn, I would now and then appeal to him, as I asserted a truth, "Isn't that true?"

He answered cautiously, sometimes almost reluctantly, or as if his heart did not give full assent to what he said; and when at last I asked him a more pointed question on some of the vital truths of the Christian religion, he said, "I suppose so; but, then, I don't think on these subjects like a great many other persons do."

"But you believe the Bible, don't you, friend?"

"Yes," he said, slowly; "a part of it, at least."

"What part of it don't you believe?"

"Well, I don't believe what some find in it about a hell."

“Oh! a Universalist?”

He winced a little. “Yes, that is what they call us, I believe.”

“But ‘hell’ is in the Bible,¹ friend. What will you do with it? If *you* take out *hell*, I have an equal right to take out *heaven*, and some one else might want to take out *immortality*.

“We can’t pick out parts from the Bible and leave the rest. We must take all, or none.²

“If you take away Genesis, I have an equal right to take away Matthew, and some one else to take away Revelation; and so, by each one taking out what he doesn’t want to believe, we would soon have no Bible at all.”

“But I don’t believe that the passages in the Bible, where it speaks of hell, mean a place of everlasting punishment, as some say they do.”

“But *the very same words* (*aion*, and *aionios*), and used in the *same connection*³ sometimes, that in the original describe the *time* in which the wicked shall be punished in hell, are used

¹ Jude 6, 7. Luke 16 : 23, 24. Psalm 9 : 17. 2 Thess. 1 : 9.

² Rev. 22 : 19.

³ Matt. 25 : 46.

to denote the *length of time* in which the redeemed shall be happy in heaven: so that, if the one are not to stay forever in hell, then neither are the other to live always in heaven; and it would be no heaven to you, after you reached it, if you felt that there was a time coming when you would have to leave it, and you did not know where you would be sent to."

"But, then, to punish a man forever, just for the sins he committed the little time he lived in this world,—it doesn't seem reasonable."

"But that sin was against an *infinite God*, you must remember; and the punishment of a sin, even in this world, is never *measured* by the *time* it takes a man to commit the sin.

"Human laws punish a man for life, for a crime that he accomplished in a few minutes. They take away his life (the utmost limit of their power to punish him), sometimes, for an act which lasted scarcely more than a moment.

"God's power, and man's life in His sight, reaches out into *eternity*; and God offers men a life of eternal happiness, freely, and pleads with

them to accept it, and yet they refuse to listen to Him, and persist in disobeying Him, and defy the consequences ; and it is only just that they should suffer them.

“But do you believe that there is any hell at all?”

There is such a variety of shades of belief among Universalists. I have never met two who had exactly the same creed. Some believe that a man receives his punishment for wrongdoing, in this life ; and others, as they watch the wicked prospering to the end, say that his conscience punished him in secret for his sins ; and others, when they see a man whose conscience is so seared as scarcely to make itself felt when he does wrong, or a man cut down in the very act of sinning, before his conscience could be reached at all, extend the punishment for a little distance into the next world,—into a kind of purgatory, where such shall be purified from sin and then admitted into heaven.

Some say that Jesus was God, and His death saved all men from all punishment ; others, that He was only a good man, sent simply to

be an example to us, &c. &c. Therefore I asked him, "Do you believe there is any hell?"

"No," he said, slowly; "I don't. I believe that God is too full of love and mercy, to make such a place as hell for men, and then send them there to suffer forever."

"God did *not* make hell for *man*, friend: the Bible tells you that. It tells you that hell was 'prepared for the devil and his angels,'¹ when they sinned;² and God, instead of sending any there against their will, pleads with them not to go to it,—to turn out of the road that leads to it;³ and, to show how much He wanted men to be saved from going there, He gave his only Son to come to this world and suffer the punishment of the sins of every one who would turn to Him and be saved.⁴ He only sends those there who persist in disobeying Him and refuse that offered Saviour, because their 'destruction is inseparable from the preservation of His own glory, and for the highest good of

¹ Matt. 25 : 41.

² Jude 6.

³ Ezek. 18 : 31, 32.

⁴ John 3 : 16.

His kingdom.' For illustration: how many little children have you at home, friend?"

"Five."

"Suppose that one of them should rebel against your authority, and disobey your commands continually, and the others should see you pass his conduct by without any notice. What effect do you think it would have upon them?"

"Well, they would think that they could do so too, I suppose."

"What would they be apt to think of *you*?"

"Well, I suppose they would lose all respect for me, after a while, and wouldn't feel like minding any thing I said to them."

"And if you lost your control over them, they would be very apt to go to ruin themselves, too."

"Now, suppose that the word should go out among the angels, and among all the worlds that you see twinkling in the sky at night, that a little world—one of the least of God's creation—had rebelled against His government, and disobeyed His commands continually, and He

had passed by the offence without any notice : the others would soon lose their respect for God, and feel that they could disobey Him without fear too ; and there would soon be anarchy and confusion all over the universe of His creation, and that universe itself would soon crumble into ruin.

“It is necessary to the existence and continuance of God’s moral government, that sin should be punished. A government which lets the guilty go free is no government at all.”

I waited a moment for him to speak ; but he still did not answer.

“*What would you do in heaven, friend, if God should let you go into it to-day?*”

He looked up inquiringly. “Do?”

“Yes. You don’t love God. You don’t like to think about Him, or hear or read about Him. You would not be happy in His presence forever.

“You scarcely ever think of heaven : it does not seem a pleasant place to you at all : there is nothing in it that you like well enough to make you want to go to it.

“*You do not really want to go to heaven at all.*

If God should give you your choice to-day, you would rather stay in this world forever, than leave it, to go there. Is that true?"

"I believe you are about right there, I must confess." And there was conviction in his tones, and more interest than he had shown before.

"I don't know how *you* stand in the eyes of the world, friend; you may be what is called a 'moral' man; but you have at least seen those who you knew were *wicked* men: haven't you?"

"Yes, indeed I have,—plenty of them."

"You have seen the strong abuse the weak, and wicked men—when they had the power—tyrannize over and oppress the good, and yet go unpunished: haven't you?"

"Yes, I have; many a time."

"You have seen men get into offices of power and trust, by every kind of wrongdoing, and then use that power and influence for their own selfish purposes, at the expense of others, and yet stand fair in the eyes of the world.

"You have seen men grow rich by every

kind of dishonesty, by every kind of sin, and yet escape the punishment of human laws, and enjoy the fruits of their wickedness to the end of their lives, while *good* men had to suffer for *their* sin: haven't you?"

"Yes, indeed, I have."

"Now, God is a God of *justice*,¹ as well as of love and mercy; and it is neither *justice*, nor *love*, nor *mercy*, to the *good*, to let *them* suffer for the wrong-doing of others, while the wicked, who caused the wrong, go free, because they have the power to oppress, or to turn aside the laws.

"You have seen enough to make you feel that there *ought* to be a day of reckoning for such men, and a *time* when such wrongs will be righted, and a *place* where the guilty will be punished; and you don't find that time and place in *this* world: you will have to *take God's word* for it that you will find them in the *next*.²

"Even in your short lifetime, you have seen injustice triumph, and wicked men prosper in

¹ Deut. 32 : 4. Psalm 89 : 14.

² Acts 17 : 31. John 5 : 28, 29. 2 Cor. 5 : 10. Rom. 2 : 6-11. Matt. 25 : 31-46.

every kind of wrong-doing, enough to make you feel that there *ought* to be a *hell* for such men to go into when they leave this world.

“You have been made to feel that more than once, although you tried to drive the thought from your mind.”

“*That’s true,*” said the wounded boy, who had been listening earnestly as we talked. “I’ve seen enough myself to have been made to feel that.”

“Now, you cannot *prove* that there is no hell, friend. Your reason tells you that there *ought* to be one; and the Bible tells you that there *is* one. Your *thinking* that there is *not* will not blot it out of existence. Truth stands the same always, whether we believe it or not. Our belief has not the least effect on any thing but *ourselves*; and, for this reason, we ought to be *very sure* that we believe the *right thing*.

“But you are only *trying* to believe that there is no place of future punishment for the wicked, because you *want* to believe it.

“It would be very pleasant for you to feel that you could live just as you pleased while

you were in this world, and yet get into heaven when you had done with it.

“But God’s Spirit has touched your heart, time and again, and made you feel how *false* your creed was,—made you feel what a sinner you were in His sight; and so you tried to drive it away with the thought that ‘God was too full of love and mercy to punish you.’ But you cannot feel *sure* of it, and never will; and it is not wise to try to cheat your soul into its belief.

“You will have to go out of this world some time, friend, whether you want to or not; and the wisest plan is for you to be prepared for the *very worst* that can meet you beyond it.¹

“The only *wise* plan is for you to get ready for heaven in the way that God has appointed.

“If you are a Christian, and there is no hell, you gain heaven just the same, and lose nothing.

“If there is a hell, and you do not try to avoid it, you lose heaven, and lose your own soul forever. Have you got good enough out of this world, so far in your lifetime, friend, to pay you for running such a risk?”

¹ Heb. 9 : 27.

“No: I have *not*,” he said, earnestly.

“This world will not give you any better happiness for the rest of the road, although you may think now that it will. Has it been pleasant enough to make you willing to do without heaven when you are done with it?”

“No, indeed, it has not.”

“You could not find a *heaven* any place in the universe, as you are to-day, friend; and if *you*, who may be what is called a ‘moral man,’ could not be happy with God now, *where* will some of those wicked men whom you have seen and heard find it?

“Let us try to follow one of them, as he leaves this world to seek it.

“A soldier in Ward —— told me, the other day, that a wicked man in his regiment was shot dead in battle, with an unfinished oath upon his lips.

“Now, we will suppose that, as you say, there is no hell, and that that soldier’s soul went straight from that battle-field to heaven.

“The very first thing he sees, as he goes in there, is God’s eye looking right at him,—look-

ing clear through and through his naked, guilty soul,—that God whose holy name the very last act of his life was to profane.

“He carries his memory with him into the next world.¹ He remembers how he has treated God for a lifetime,—how he disobeyed Him, and called Him names, and treated Him with contempt or indifference, and, perhaps, made sport of Him, and denied Him, and ridiculed His word and His people, and every thing that belonged to Him.

“He knows now that that eye has followed him at every step of his road on earth.² He tries to look up, and he finds himself *face to face* with that *dear Saviour* whom he had despised and rejected, and, perhaps, denied; whose name had perhaps never been upon his lips except in an oath, and that eye which looked down from Calvary in agony for his sins, looking through and through his guilty soul, stained with all its sins.

“How do you think that man would feel?

¹ Luke 16 : 23, 24, 27, 28.

² Prov. 5 : 21. Prov. 15 : 3. 2 Chron. 16 : 9.

“I tell you, friend, you may say that ‘hell’ means ‘the grave,’ or the ‘valley of Hinnom’ near Jerusalem, or that there is no such word at all; but it *would be hell for that man right beside the throne of God*; and he would be glad at that moment to be sent away to such a place, to try to get out of the presence of that all-searching, awful Eye.”¹

“That’s true,” said the wounded boy, earnestly.

“He turns away to try to escape from it, and he finds himself among those who had loved God on earth.

“He remembers how he used to talk about them, and treat them, and hate them, when he knew them in this world.

“His *nature is not changed*: he hates them still; he does not find their society any more congenial there. He sees among them some whom he has wronged and ill-treated; and the sight adds to his torment.

“There is no *heaven* for his guilty soul among *them*.²

¹ Rev. 6 : 16, 17.

² Psalm 34 : 7-13, 21.

“That Eye is still following him,¹ and he tries to hide from it among the angels.

“What would *he* do in *their* pure presence? There is no heaven for him among such as they.

“What will he do? How will he spend his long eternity? He is cut off from all that he enjoyed on earth. He loves sin still: he cannot get it there. He hates purity and holiness still: what will he do where all are pure and holy?²

“It will be hell for that man even within the very courts of heaven.”

“I believe you are right.”

“Suppose still (as you say) that there is no other world for men, and that *all* who have ever lived here, have gone there.

“As he turns away, he finds some who were his wicked companions on earth, and some even worse than they.

“He finds himself among murderers and thieves and robbers, and men whom human

¹ Psalm 139.

² Rev. 21 : 27. Rev. 22 : 14, 15.

laws (*more just* than *God*,¹ according to your creed) shut up in jails and penitentiaries, or sent out of this world by death, as too vile to live among their fellow-men; and yet God has let them come up to spend an eternity among their innocent victims, and among the good,—among those who hated sin and loved God on earth.

“*What kind of a heaven* would it be, do you think, with such men in it, with their hearts unchanged and as full of sin as ever?

“How would *you* feel, if you were shut up among such men for a lifetime, even?

“Wherever such men were gathered together here, they made a hell on earth; and wherever such as they are gathered together, they will *make a hell, even within the very walls of heaven.*”

“You are right there. That’s the truth,” he said, emphatically.

“It would neither be *just* nor *kind*, to let such men go in among those who shrank from their society on earth,—to let them live forever among those who had loved and obeyed God here.

¹ Job 4 : 17.

“There would be no *heaven* at all for the *good*, with such men continually beside them.

“It would be no act of love and mercy to keep such men for an eternity face to face with that God whom they *hate still*; to keep their guilty souls forever under the gaze of that all-searching *Eye* which *now* they know read their most secret thought on earth;¹ whose visible presence is before them, and looking through them, to the farthest limits of His kingdom above.

“To let such men go in among pure spirits, whose presence would make their own guilt seem darker,—I think, if those men had their choice, they would rather be shut up in a world by themselves, or with other lost spirits like themselves, than stay there.”

“I believe you are right.”

“Then, if there is no hell, Satan and his legions are in heaven too.

“I think I would rather not go into such a place as that would be, friend.

“I can keep away from evil influences and

¹ Psalm 44 : 21.

evil men here ; but there I would have them around me forever.

“No: your creed will not do, friend. If there is no *hell* for the *wicked*, then neither is there any *heaven* for the *good*.

“If *all* go to the same place after death, that place can never be a *heaven*.

“Your creed has neither reason nor revelation to rest on, friend. Do not venture your soul upon it.

“There is only *one* way in which the sinner can find a heaven anywhere in the universe of God ; and that is, in the way marked out for him in the Bible,—by giving his heart to Jesus, and letting Him wash it from sin, and change it by His Spirit, and prepare it for heaven, while he is upon the earth.

“‘Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye *must* be born again;’¹ for ‘Except a man be born from above,’ before he leaves this world, and have his nature and his tastes changed from what they are by nature, ‘he *cannot* enter into the kingdom of God.’”²

¹ John 3 : 7.

² John 3 : 3, 5.

Before I left, he promised me that he would try not to make any *mistakes* about his soul; that he would try, God helping him, to give himself to Christ, and seek an eternity of happiness only through Him.

I had no opportunity for another conversation with him before he was discharged and sent home; and so I will have to wait until the judgment to know if he redeemed his promise.

But the next time I saw the wounded boy, he had (I trust) given his heart to Jesus and found the “way” to heaven in Him. He found a little foretaste of it in his heart down here, even, I used to think, sometimes, as I watched his happy face moving around the ward,—happy even while his hands grasped the crutches that he might have to use for a lifetime. As soon as he was able to travel, he too was discharged, and went home.

I have not found many Universalists in the hospitals. Men passing through such scenes as they had passed through, have been *forced* to feel the necessity of some place of future punishment, and have been placed in situations

where they felt such false foundations shake beneath them, as they perhaps never would have done had they remained at home. Even *there*, few who profess such creeds (perhaps none except the very ignorant) are without some misgivings as to their truth.

“I have been a member of the Universalist church for years,” said an intelligent soldier, who was seeking Jesus as the door¹ to heaven, and who, I trust, found Him.

“I tried hard to believe its doctrines, because I *wanted* to believe them. I read their books and listened to their preaching; but, all I could do, this thought would come into my mind:—‘What if there *should* be a hell, after all?’ I could not feel *sure* that there was *not*; and I could not find any real rest or comfort in their creed.”

Passing down one side of Ward —, one day, among some new patients from the Lower Mississippi, a sick soldier on an opposite cot (No. 80) beckoned me to come to him.

“I want you to pray with me and talk to me about these things too,” he said, as I bent

¹ John 10 : 9.

over him. "I have tried to be a Universalist all my life, and I thought I was one ; but I find *Universalism may do to live by, but it won't do to die by.* I begin to feel that there *is* a hell. I am afraid I shall have to die now. I can't last much longer ; and, oh, I *am not ready !*"

A few nights afterwards, the nurse was attending to some of the patients at the other end of the long ward ; and when he came back he found "No. 80" on his knees beside his cot, *dead*. With his dying strength he had crawled out of his bed to pray ; and in that posture the Master sent for him.

Yes, Universalism, or any other "ism" not founded on the word of God, *may* "do to *live by*;" but he who builds his hopes for eternity on *any thing else* than the Rock Christ Jesus, as He is offered to us in the gospel, builds "his house upon the sand;"¹ and when the tides of death close around it, then it is washed away, and the poor, shivering, frightened soul drifts out into the dark, stormy ocean of eternity, alone, without an anchor and without a hope.

¹ Psalm 18 : 2. 1 Cor. 3 : 11. Matt. 7 : 24-28.

THE BACKSLIDER.

THE BACKSLIDER.

“I DID think I was a Christian, once. I belonged to the church before I came into the army.”

How many times we listened to these words in the hospitals! and how sad the condition of the backslider or self-deceived one!—worse, if possible, than of those who never thought they were Christians at all. Their former experience makes them doubt and hold back, afraid to trust a hope that has failed them once, and almost makes them doubt the reality of religion itself.

We listened to those words again, one day, from the lips of No. 9, as we sat beside his cot, talking to him of Jesus.

“And why are you not a Christian now?” I

asked. "You know the Saviour promised to be with His disciples 'always, even to the end.' I know that you have a great many temptations in the army, that you do not have at home; 'but God is faithful,' who promised that He will not suffer His people to be tempted above that they are able to bear, but will, with the temptation, also 'make a way to escape.'¹ And the Saviour Himself was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin, and is able to succour them that are tempted.² His grace is sufficient for all His people's needs; His strength is made perfect in their weakness.³ But do you think you *ever* really *did* belong to *Him*? or did you only belong to the *church*?"

"I don't know," was the sad answer. "I thought I was all right once; but I have got so far out of the way, I doubt it now."

"You see, a great many belong to church, who, I am afraid, do not belong to Jesus. A great many have their names written in the church-books, who, I am afraid, do not have

¹ 1 Cor. 10 : 13.

² Heb. 2 : 18. Heb. 4 : 15.

³ 2 Cor. 12 : 9.

them written in the Lamb's Book of Life. 'By their fruits ye shall know them.'¹

"You have seen both kinds in the army. You have seen two men, perhaps in the same regiment, whom you knew at home. Both of their names stood fair on the church-books there. You could not point to one and say, '*He* is a true Christian,' and to the other and say, '*He* is not;' because both seemed to be what they professed. But one of them, when he got away from home-influences, among strangers, where he thought the church would never hear of his doings, very soon became as bad as any one around him; while the other remembered that he could not go to any place where God could not see him. There was no road so lonely, no night so dark, as to hide from His eye; no sin so secret that He did not know. He remembered, too, that all the time, and everywhere, that writing down of word and look and act and thought, was going on in God's book; and he loved God, and feared to disobey Him; and so he tried to obey His orders just the same as

¹ Luke 6 : 43-46. Gal. 5 : 19-26.

if he was home. *He* belonged to Jesus; the *other* only *belonged to church.*"

"I have seen that very thing in my own company," said a convalescent, who, with several others, had come up while we were talking.

"Being a Christian means *belonging to Christ*. If you belong to Him, you are a Christian, no matter by what church-name you may be called. If you do not belong to Him, you may belong to every church in the country, and that will not save you. If Jesus is your Captain, and your 'pass' is signed with His name, when you go up to the gate of heaven you can get in. If it is signed 'Church-Member,' 'Morality,' 'Good Deeds,' 'Feelings,' or any other name, you cannot; because 'there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved,' but the name of Christ.¹

"If you have ever with your whole heart accepted Him as your Saviour, and are resting on *Him alone* for salvation; if you have ever made an *unconditional surrender* of your whole self, soul and body, both for this world and the

¹ Acts 4 : 12.

next, into the hands of Jesus, to do with you just as He pleases, and truly *belong* to Him, you are safe. He has promised to be with you while you stay in this world,¹ to come for you when you die,² and to claim you in the judgment.³

“When that last ‘Roll-Call’ sounds,⁴ which you and every one must answer,—in that last grand ‘Inspection-Day,’ when you and I and all the world must appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, to give an account for the deeds done in the body, whether they be good or bad,⁵ if you have no friend on the other side strong enough to help you, what will you do?

“The strongest man on earth cannot save you: he cannot save himself. The church cannot help you: there is no church there, but of those who belong to Christ. If you stand there alone, with all your sins upon you, you are lost.

“When God’s ‘account-books’ are opened

¹ Matt. 28 : 20.

² John 14 : 3.

³ Matt. 25 : 34.

⁴ 1 Cor. 15 : 52.

⁵ Rom. 14 : 10-12. Matt. 25 : 31-46. Rom. 2 : 6. 2 Cor. 5 : 10.

that day, if there is *one single sin* standing under your name, you cannot get into heaven. *God will not let one single sin go in there.* It would not be heaven any longer if He did.

“If you have never done one sinful act in your life, if you have never said one sinful word, if you have only one sinful thought standing under your name that day, you cannot take that one sinful thought into heaven, and it is too late to get rid of it there: so you must stay outside forever.”

“Who then,” said a middle-aged soldier, on the next cot, who had told me he was a Christian,—“who then *can* be saved? for there is no man living but has *more* than *one* sin written against him.”

“That’s true, brother. You and I, and all, know that there are a great many sins written under each of our names,—things God told us to do, which we have not done; things He told us not to do, which we did; broken laws whose penalty we must pay, if we have not been redeemed before. You have gone *a long way in God’s debt*, brother; and if that debt is still

standing against you that day, you cannot pay it, and so you are lost. But," I said, opening a book I had in my hand, and pointing to the opposite pages as I spoke, "if you *really* and *truly* belong to Jesus, *that debt is taken out from under your name, and put under the name of Christ.* It is charged to *His* account, and *He* has paid it for *every one* who belongs to Him,¹—paid it on Calvary (you know what a price it cost Him); and so it does not stand against *you* any more.² You stand clear in God's sight, just as if you had never committed a sin in the world.³ 'The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.'⁴

"And then will Jesus claim you. He will say, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'⁵ He says He will confess you before His Father and before His angels;⁶ that is, He will acknowledge that you are His. He is the Judge Himself; and if the Judge Himself is your Friend, and you are His, you

¹ Isa. 53. ² Col. 2 : 14. ³ Heb. 10 : 17. ⁴ 1 John 1 : 7.

⁵ Matt. 25 : 34. ⁶ Rev. 3 : 5. Luke 12 : 8. Matt. 10 : 32.

are safe. He is stronger than death and the grave, stronger than hell and the judgment, and will bring you off 'more than conqueror' over them all.

"That one simple fact, that you belong to Christ, is all that will save you then; and the question for you to settle now is, '*Am I His, or am I not?*'

"We cannot study this question too closely, because there is *very great danger* of our *deceiving even ourselves*. There is such a thing as *thinking* we are on the road to heaven, when we are *not*. Christ Himself says so;¹ and what a terrible thing it would be to go up to the very gate of heaven (if that were possible), thinking we were going right in, and hear, instead, the words, 'Depart; I *never* knew you.' We have much need to 'examine ourselves, whether we be in the faith,'² here. We cannot come back to earth and get on the right road then, if we have made a mistake.

"If it was only a question that concerned our body, it would not make so much difference; for we will have to lay that down in a little while

¹ Matt. 7 : 21-23.

² 2 Cor. 13 : 5.

anyhow; but a mistake here costs us *our soul for eternity*.

“There are *two roads*, in particular, that look very much like the right one; and a great many travel along them, feeling comfortable because they do not take the trouble to look closely enough at the ‘guide-book’ to see the difference.

“One is the *Morality* road. Those who travel this road have quit swearing, or drinking, or some bad habits they may have had, and joined church, and walk along very well satisfied with themselves, thinking they are good enough for heaven, and will be sure to get there, forgetting that Christ says, ‘*I am the way: no man cometh to the Father but by me.*’¹ *Morality follows religion.* The true Christian will be a moral man;² but morality alone cannot save us:³ *Christ only* can do that.

“Then there is the *Feelings* road. At some period of our lives—perhaps at some time of a revival in the church—we get very much afraid of death and hell. Perhaps we have heard

¹ John 14 : 6.

² 2 Tim. 2 : 19.

³ Rom. 3 : 20. Gal. 2 : 16. Acts 13 : 39.

some preacher talk a great deal about these things, and we become very much excited; we can scarcely sleep or eat, and our thoughts are all about death and the judgment. Our feelings are worked up until we are almost crazy. But this is not sorrow for sin against a pure and holy God,—only *fear* of its punishment. This is mere mental excitement, and cannot last. There must be a reaction. That is a fixed law of nature. When you are very much frightened, how strong you are! but how weak you are after it is over! If this ward was on fire, I suppose this sick brother could find strength enough to get up and walk out of the door there, from the flames; but, after he was safe in the street, how weak he would feel! This would be from physical reaction,—the calm after the storm. So, when mental reaction comes after so-called religious excitement, because we feel calmer, we rest on our feelings and think we are Christians, when in reality the peace that comes from saving faith in Christ has nothing to do with it. *We should feel happy because we are safe,—not safe because we feel happy.* I have known some whose lives

afterwards proved that they were *really converted* to God at the time of great religious excitement; but if you watch closely, you will find that too many of those who make a profession then, go back again as bad as ever."

"That's so," said "No. 9," earnestly. "I've seen that myself."

"You will find that some of them hold out long enough to join church, and pray, and talk in public, and for a while seem to be really Christians. The word in their hearts is the 'good seed, that fell on stony places, and sprang up quickly;' but when the hot sun of temptation or persecution arose, it 'withered away, because it had no root.'¹

"The *army* is an excellent '*detector*' for such men. When they are surrounded by the temptations of the camp, and are cut off from home-influences, they very soon show what colours they are *really* marching under. They leave off praying and reading their Bible, because they fear the laugh and sneer of man more than they fear or love God; and in a little time,

¹ Matt. 13 : 20-22.

perhaps, you will see them playing cards, and hear them swearing and talking just as badly as any one around them. You would never suspect from their actions that they had ever professed the Saviour's name. And yet, perhaps, if you should ask them in confidence, they would tell you that they were Christians, and try to excuse their conduct with, 'It is so hard to live right in the army.'

"But, if you ask further, you will find too often that the only reason they can give for their hope is, *not because Christ died for them* and that they have given themselves to and trust in Him, but because they felt badly on the subject of religion once, and then felt better after it."

"But don't you think," said one near us, who had been quietly listening, "*that true Christians can backslide?*"

"Yes, I *do* think it. God Himself says, 'Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings.'¹ 'Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts;'² and He would not have said that if it were not

¹ Jer. 3 : 22.

² Mal. 3 : 7.

possible both for them to go away and to return again. But 'you have perhaps seen a lamb fall into the mire; but you never saw it wallow in it, as if it loved it, as the swine do.' I could imagine a true Christian who had been in the habit of swearing before he was converted, if he should be very much provoked, suddenly, when he was not on his guard,—I could even imagine an oath coming from his lips at such a moment; but how quickly he would repent and cry for pardon! Peter, you remember, swore, and denied his Master too; but how quickly 'he went out and wept bitterly'!¹ David fell very far too; but as soon as he was convinced of his sin, he repented and turned to God.² But, my friend, I should *very strongly* suspect that a man who could go on for weeks, months, or perhaps years, day after day, taking the Saviour's name profanely on his lips, or doing any thing that He has expressly forbidden, had *never really* felt that dear Saviour's love in his heart. I should be afraid to trust my soul for eternity on such an experience as that. I should be very much

¹ Matt. 26 : 69-75.² 2 Sam. 12 : 13.

afraid that a hope that was not strong enough to carry me through the army would not be strong enough to carry me over the dark waters of death. I think the *safest* plan in that case would be to *throw away that old hope altogether*, and go to Christ *at once*, as a lost and helpless sinner, pleading for mercy, just as if I had never tried to do so before. The *wisest* plan would be, like the prodigal son,¹ to arise and go to his father *now*, ‘and say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before Thee, and am *no more worthy* to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants.’ You see, he did not claim any of the rights or privileges of a *son*. He felt that he had forfeited them by his sinful wanderings; and he was content to take the *lowest place*,—a place among the servants who waited on his father and brother,—if only he could find shelter in that father’s home once more. And don’t you remember how *gladly* he was received? How, when he was yet ‘a great way off,’ that kind father saw him, and ran out to meet him, and fell upon his neck, and kissed

¹ Luke 15 : 11-32.

him, and led him into the house, and dressed him in the best robe, and killed the fatted calf to feast him with, and what rejoicing there was all over the house? So is there 'joy in heaven' over the repenting sinner. So does our heavenly Father come out to meet us and receive us in love when we return to Him. So does He take off our sin-stained rags, and clothe us in the 'robe of Christ's righteousness,' and make us to sit down at the feast of love He has prepared for us. *How can we turn away from this great love, and feed on the husks of the world, when there is food enough and to spare, and peace and rest, in our Father's house?* 'Turn ye, turn ye; for *why* will ye die?'¹ '*To-day* if you will hear his voice, harden not your heart,'² but turn to him and live."

Before I left, "No. 9" promised me that, *Christ helping him*, he would try to get back again to his Father's house *that night*, before he slept.

"Where is No. 9?" I asked his comrade the next time I visited the ward. I saw his bed

¹ Ezek. 33 : 11.² Heb. 4 : 7.

was empty. "He is dead," was the answer. And in the judgment I do not know on *which hand* to look for him. His comrade could tell me nothing more than that he became suddenly worse a few days after I saw him, and died,—apparently peacefully.

Backsliding soldier of the Cross, wherever you may be to-day, that kind "Captain of your salvation," whose "colours" you have let trail in the dust, and so brought disgrace on His name in the presence of His enemies, speaks to you :

"*I know thy works*, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. Remember therefore how thou hast received, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.

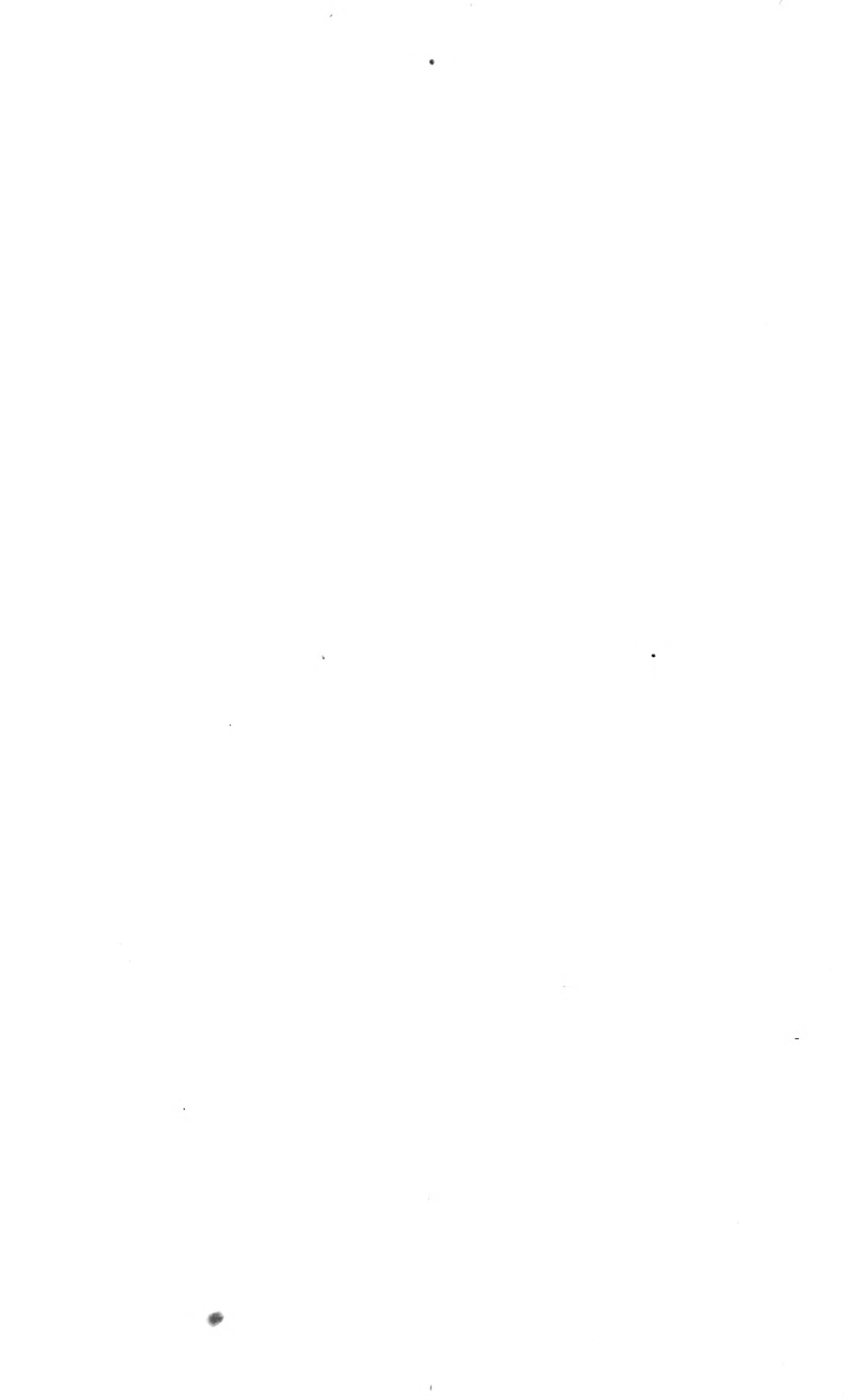
"He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment, and I will *not* blot his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before His angels."¹

¹ Rev. 3 : 1, 3, 5.

THE
CARELESS SINNER;

OR,

A Debtor to God.



THE CARELESS SINNER;

OR,

A DEBTOR TO GOD.

As I went into Ward 9, one day, I found one of the three crazy men in that ward, sitting on a bench near the door, and stopped with him for a few moments.

He had lost both parents and home since he came into the army, and had brooded over the loss—poor boy!—until he became deranged, his madness taking the form of a deep melancholy.

The first time I saw him, he was sitting behind a pillar, so near the stove that the perspiration was rolling in great drops from his face, while he was apparently unconscious of the heat, or of any thing that was going on around him; and there was such a hopeless, aimless look on

his young face that it arrested me, as I was passing to one of my sick men.

But neither then, nor for several times afterwards, could I elicit much more than monosyllables, between deep sighs.

That day I had brought him some little presents, to try to arouse him and interest him,—among them, the “Illustrated Tract Primer.” He could not read; and I tried to have him learn “A,” and find all the A’s on the pages, as I turned the leaves. Sometimes he would point out one for me; but oftener he would answer, between long-drawn sighs, “Oh, it is no use.”

“Oh, it is no use for me to learn to read,” he said, at last. “I don’t see any use for me to live. I have no father, and no mother, and no home. You had better give that to some one else,” he said, handing me back a nice little “housewife” I had given him. “It a’n’t no use for me to have it.” And then he took up, and kept repeating, the sad refrain, “I have no father, and no mother, and no home,” until my heart ached.

Several convalescents had gathered to that end of the ward, and were watching us with a good deal of interest.

"I always feel that I ought to be very good, and love God a great deal, when I look on such a sight as this," I said, turning to a new-comer who was seated on a cot near us.

"Yes: it is a sad sight, that's a fact."

"I always feel more strongly, at such a time, that my mind is God's gift,¹ and that I ought to use it in His service as long as He lets me keep it. Don't you think I ought?"

"Yes, I suppose so. I have seen quite a number of soldiers go crazy since I came into the army," he added, quickly, trying to change the subject. "Sickness and trouble, I suppose, caused it."

"Why were not you one of those crazy men, friend? What better use than they had you been making of your reason, that God should let you bring it home untouched? Had you been spending it in His service?"

"No: I am afraid not."

¹ 2 Tim. 1 : 7.

“Have you been using it to think of Him and study your duty to Him, and to learn His will in such a way as to *do* it? How much has God been in your mind, and your mind been in subjection to His will?”

“Not very much, I am afraid.”

“I do not know any thing about you, friend. I hope you would not do such a thing, but you have at least known men who did,—take that reason which God gave them and preserved to them, and try to convince themselves and others that there was no God, that the Bible was only a fable, and that its teachings were all a delusion.”

“Oh, no: I am not that bad! I believe that the Bible is true.”

“Only you do not believe that its teachings concern *you*?”

“Oh, yes: I know they do.”

“Have you *acted* as if they did? Have you recognized God’s right to control your thoughts, and consulted His wishes, even in worldly matters, as to how you should use the powers of mind He has given you?¹ Have you

¹ Prov. 3 : 5, 6. Psalm 37 : 5. Prov. 16 : 3.

been using them even in the least to work His will?"

"I am afraid not."

"And your hands,—I see God has let you bring both of them back, while there is more than one armless sleeve even in this ward. Every muscle of them is His gift to you, to be used only under the control of His laws.¹ Has God preserved them to you because you used them as He wished? or have you used them as you pleased, without any reference to His will in the matter? Have you never raised them in anger, or to break His laws or the laws of your country, or used them to wrong your fellow-men? What have you been doing with your hands, friend, that God should let you keep them both?"

"And your *feet*,"—I continued, seeing he did not answer: "you have them both still, I see, while yonder is one of your companions who has only one left," glancing down the ward to where B. was hobbling around upon his crutches;

¹ Ex. 20 : 4-6. Ex. 20 : 8-13, 15. 1 John 3 : 15. ♦ Isa. 66 : 2. Hab. 2 : 15.

“and near him sits one who has lost the use of both. Have you been using your feet to walk in the way of God’s commandments?¹ Have they carried you to His house whenever you could go?² Have they never helped you to break His holy day?³ Have they never carried you where you knew that He did not allow you to go, or into a place which you knew He had forbidden you to visit?⁴ Has the fear of His displeasure ever restrained a step, or a sincere desire to please Him controlled one of their motions?

“And your *eyes*:—many of the soldiers come back without the use of one, or both. Have you never looked upon what you knew God had forbidden?⁵ Have you never read what you knew, even while you read it, that He disapproved of your reading?⁶ Have you used your eyes, as often as you should, to read the Bible—God’s own message to your soul—and learn what He wished you to do and what He told you

¹ Luke 1 : 6. ² Heb. 10 : 25. ³ Isa. 58 : 13.

⁴ Prov. 4 : 14. Prov. 1 : 10-15. Prov. 7.

⁵ Prov. 23 : 29-33.

⁶ 1 Cor. 15 : 33.

not to do?¹ Have you never, by a look, helped others to sin, or used your eyes as servants to open the door and carry sin into your heart?² Have you received them as God's gifts to you, subject to His laws, and used them according to His directions always, that He should have taken such care of them for you? You did not preserve them; for if you could, so could others, and if they could, they would have done so.

“And your *hearing*,”—I could see that he heard me distinctly, although he still did not answer: “have your ears always been closed to sinful sounds, or listened unwillingly when you could not escape from them? Have you never sat contentedly and listened to conversation which you knew a pure and holy God disapproved of? Have you never closed them to the voice of instruction or warning?³ Have you always, when it was in your power, placed them where His word might have access through them to your heart,—used them to learn His will in such a way as to do it?

¹ John 5 : 39.

² Matt. 5 : 28. Ex. 20 : 17.

³ 2 Tim. 4 : 4. Matt. 13 : 15.

“I remember a number of soldiers whom I have met in the hospitals, who had lost the use of their *voice*, or could only speak in a painful whisper. You have met persons, perhaps, who were altogether dumb.

“God gave you the gift of *speech*, and has preserved it to you. He has given you laws by which it was to be governed.¹ Have you been using it to keep them, or to break them?

“I hope you would not do such a thing, friend, but you have at least heard men take the voice that God gave them, and the breath that they received fresh from His hand every moment, and which they could not have for one moment unless He did give it,²—you have heard them take that very breath and call Him *hard names* with it, and say all manner of hard things against Him, and make sport of Him, and of His people, and of His word, and even use it to say that there was no God.

“Isn’t it dreadful to think that any one could

¹ Eph. 4 : 25-29, 31. Matt. 5 : 33-38. Ex. 20 : 7-16. Psalm 107 : 32. Eph. 5 : 19. 1 Tim. 2 : 8. Luke 11 : 1-14.

² Gen. 2 : 7. Job 12 : 10.

do such a thing as that! Try to strike God, as it were, with His own gift! Isn't it a wonder that He did not take that voice from them in the very act,—stop giving them the breath they made such use of?"

"Yes, it does seem hard, that's a fact, when you come to think about it," he said, slowly, at length. "To tell you the candid truth, I have been a very wicked man all my life. I have always had good health until here lately, and I never stopped to think about these things, much; but, still, I always did believe that there was a God, and that the Bible was true, and I always meant to be a Christian some day."

"And, in the mean time, you just took God's gifts and used them as you pleased."

"Yes: I suppose so."

"That was *not right*, friend, oh, indeed it was not right, to treat God that way. How could you do it? Wasn't it a wonder that He did not take them from you? Hasn't He had patience with you! Hasn't He been kind! Have you ever thanked Him for it?"

"No."

“You have prayed to God sometimes in your life, surely?”

“No: if I must own it, I never have.”

“Not in all these years? More than twenty of them; twenty-five, perhaps; but we will say twenty, at least.

“Will you take this pencil, friend, and on the fly-leaf of this little book compute the number of minutes in those years,—and we will say ten breaths, at least, to the minute,—and see how many breaths you have drawn direct from God’s hand, and never *thanked* Him for one of them, or used *one* in His service?”

He took the pencil from my hand, and worked out the sum,—105,192,000.

“And with every one of those breaths God gave you the gifts of sight, hearing, speech, motion and mind (except when you were asleep; and then He preserved them for you).

“What a *debt* you *owe* Him! And that is not the worst of it. You have not only not been using His gifts in His service, but you have been using them in the service of the enemy,—making use of them only to fight against God.”

“Oh, no. I am not so bad as that. I have never done much for God, I know; but, still, I don’t think that I have been fighting against Him.”

“God Himself says, ‘He that is not with me is *against* me; and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth abroad.’¹

“Now, whose word am I to believe,—His, or yours?”

“Why, His, of course.”

“Let us think a little, and see what that means.

“Sometimes—more than once in your life—God has sent his Holy Spirit down to you, and made you feel that you were not doing right, and that you ought to do better, and troubled you with thoughts of death, and of the time when you would have to go before your Judge and give an account of yourself, and made you to feel something of what a sinner you were in His sight, until you could not help wishing you were a Christian. Didn’t He?”

“Well, yes. I suppose everybody feels that way, sometimes.”

¹ Matt. 12 : 30.

“Now, that was God’s Spirit, *God Himself*, knocking at the door of your heart, saying, ‘Open unto me;’ and, instead of doing so, you picked up a newspaper or a novel, and used your *eyes* to read it, and so drove Him from your thoughts; or let your *feet* carry you into some place of amusement, or among your sinful companions, and listened to their conversation and joined in it; or used your *hands* in some work or amusement that would occupy your thoughts. In one way or another, *you fought against God* until you had succeeded in driving Him from your mind. Isn’t that true?”

“I must say that it is. I can’t deny it.”

“And that is not all. ‘God so loved the world’ as to give His only Son to come down to this world, and suffer and die, that such sinners as you and I could be saved; and you knew it; and all these long years, ever since you were old enough to understand, Christ has been calling to you, ‘Look unto me, and be saved;’ ‘Turn ye, turn ye; for why will ye die?’ and you heard Him, and just kept on in your own way as if He had not spoken. You have not treated Him

with *respect*, even. You have taken His holy name to swear by." (I had noticed him wince when I spoke of calling God hard names.) "That dear Jesus,—dear Saviour! How could you do it?

"He died to buy a pardon for you, and has been pleading with you, by His word and Spirit, for many years, to accept of it; and you would not do it.

"If there were no God, no heaven, no hell, no Saviour,—if all of them should cease to exist from this moment, and you knew it,—it would make scarcely any change in your course to-day. You could scarcely treat them with *more indifference* than you have been doing for these twenty years or more. That is a strong assertion, friend; but think if it is not true.

"And that is not all. You have not been travelling that road alone. You have been taking some of those around you along with you. Your example and influence have encouraged and helped others to sin,—how much, you know, perhaps, and God knows; and for that, too, you must give an account.

“God gave you whatever time and talents and influence you may have had;¹ and you have used them in the service of Satan.²

“He required you to give Him your heart;³ and you have let the enemy keep possession of it.⁴

“He required you to ‘offer up your body a *living* sacrifice to God, which is your reasonable service;’⁵ and, instead of doing that, you have used every faculty of your mind, and every power of your body, to hold out against Him, to resist His will, to refuse to submit to Him, to reject His love, and to rebel against His government. That is hard talk, friend; but you know that it is true.”

“Yes, it is hard, that’s a fact; but it is nothing more than the truth, I suppose; although I never thought of it that way before.”

“Now, how long are you going to treat God that way?”

“Not very long, I hope. I will tell you: I have thought more about these things since I

¹ James 1 : 17.

² Rom. 6 : 16. John 8 : 34.

³ Prov. 23 : 26.

⁴ 1 John 3 : 10.

⁵ Rom. 12 : 1.

have been sick, than ever I did in my life before; and I have just about made up my mind, that, if I live to get home, I will turn over a new leaf, and try to live a Christian for the rest of my days."

"But you ought not to stand in that position towards God for another day or another hour."

"I know; but, you see, I am looking for my discharge every day now; and I will give you my solemn promise that I will not put off attending to these things any longer."

"Will you ask God now to help you keep that promise? Will you take the first step in the road to heaven, open up the first direct communication between your soul and God, to-night,—before you sleep,—by earnest prayer to Him that He will, for Christ's sake, pardon all your sins, and help you, by His Spirit, to give yourself up, soul and body, to Jesus, now?"

"Yes: I will promise to do that, God helping me," he said, as if he meant it.

That was the last time I saw him. When I went back the next week, his cot was empty. He had received his discharge and gone home.

Reader, what are God's gifts to you? And what use have you been making of them? You may succeed in driving every thought of your debt to God from your mind now; but, none the less surely for your not thinking of it, "Know thou that for *all these things* God will bring thee into judgment."¹

¹ Eccl. 11 : 9.

THE MORALIST.



THE MORALIST.

I LOVED to go into the wards in the winter twilight. It was the pleasantest hour of the day. The convalescents, who on sunny days crept out into the sunshine on the piazzas, or, with their crutches or canes, strolled around the parade-ground or visited their comrades in other wards, were at that hour gathered in little groups around the bright wood fires or the stoves, talking quietly, or reading, or their thoughts going out to another fireside far away, and their hearts melting with the memories of home, or were lying, resting and thinking, on their cots.

Supper was over, too, and the duties of the day; and the soldiers on duty as nurses had time to mingle with their charges for a little while, unless the ward was very full of sick.

One evening, when at the B—— Hospital, I went back into Ward 9, to spend an hour with the sick men, while some friends were holding a meeting in the chapel with the convalescents, and soldiers from the barracks near us.

I had gone down one side of the ward that day, talking to each one; and upon the first cot at the lower end of the ward, when I went back in the evening, I found a young German, who had been absent during the day.

He was not a Christian, he told me; and, while I was talking with him and a middle-aged, happy “pilgrim” on the next cot (in a hopeless decline), who had reached the land of “Beulah” and was waiting and watching for the “messenger with his token” to come for him and take him home, a nurse, whom I had seen in the ward for the first time that day but did not have any opportunity to talk to, came and sat down beside us.

He was a paroled prisoner from the barracks, he told me,—had looked upon death in almost every form, had passed through many a scene

of danger and suffering, but had come out in safety through them all.

"God must have loved you a great deal, friend, to have taken such care of you," I said, when he had finished. "Did He do it because you loved Him?"

"Oh, yes: of course I feel grateful to God for bringing me through so many dangers."

"Are you a Christian, friend?"

"No: I can't exactly say that I am a Christian. Still, I don't think that I am a very bad man. I never swear, nor drink, nor play cards, nor do any thing very wicked. I always attended church regularly when I was at home. I couldn't get to do that, very much, since I came into the army, you know; but still I read my Bible, and try to deal justly and honestly with every man, and do as near right as I can." And there was a great deal of self-complacency in his tone as he told me this.

"But you don't do right always, do you? You have done wrong acts, and said wrong words, sometimes in your life, haven't you?"

"Yes," he said, slowly, "I suppose so: I

suppose no one can altogether keep from doing wrong all the time."

"No. 'If we say we have not sinned,' what does the Bible say about us, brother?" I asked the Christian soldier.

"It says, 'we make God a liar, and His word is not in us.'"¹

"Suppose," I said to the nurse, "that all the thoughts that have passed through your mind to-day were printed in large letters, all around the walls of this ward, so that every one of the men could read them. Would you care?"

He winced a little. "I think I would rather not."

"They are all written down in God's book, friend,—every one of them; and your comrades will read them, too, some day.

"Suppose that, as you walked around through the day, or lay on your bed at night, you had to speak out every thought that came into your mind, so loudly that every one in the room could hear you: would you be willing to do it?"

¹ 1 John 1 : 10.

“No: I would not.”

“‘If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.’¹

“God heard you think, friend. Every thought of your heart was spoken to His ear; and your fellow-men will hear every one of them, too, when the account-books are opened.

“Will you do this?—for one day only, *note down* the thoughts which pass through your mind that you would not be willing to let your comrades hear, and then multiply their sum by the number of days in your life; and it will give you a little idea of how the ‘account’ of your *thoughts* stands on the book above.”

“But,” asked the young German, “don’t you think that if a man becomes a Christian, all these things will be blotted out? Don’t it say so some place in the Bible?”

“‘Sins are sometimes compared, in the Bible, to debts,² which are written in the creditor’s book, and crossed or blotted out when they are paid. Our sins are all written down in God’s book of remembrance, or accounts, out

¹ 1 John 3 : 20.

² Matt. 6 : 12.

of which all shall be judged on the last day;¹ and when our sins are pardoned they are said to be blotted out,² and not found any more, though they should be sought for.’³ That is, when a man becomes a Christian, Jesus takes that man’s debts, or sins, upon Himself,—credits them to His own account; and He has already paid the debt of all of His redeemed ones; but that account is still on the book, although it does not stand against the ransomed sinner any more; because the Bible⁴ says that ‘God shall bring *every work* into judgment, with *every secret thing*, whether it be *good*⁵ or whether it be *evil*;⁶’ and this is needful, ‘that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God,’⁶ and His justice be shown clearly, for this reason :

“There are hypocrites in the world, who wear a fair character to the eyes of their fellow-men, and carry that character with them to the grave, it may be; and yet God’s book shows a

¹ Rev. 20 : 12.

² Isa. 44 : 22.

³ Jer. 50 : 20.

⁴ Eccl. 12 : 14.

⁵ 1 Cor. 4 : 1–6.

⁶ Rom. 3 : 19.

long list of secret sins, known to few, perhaps, besides God and their own souls.

“Suppose that you should see such a man, whom you had thought to be a good man, standing at the left hand that day, along with those you knew to be openly wicked: wouldn’t you feel like asking why, and think it was not just? And so the account-books will be read, to show you why.

“Then, too, a man may sin *in his heart* every day and hour of his life, and yet no one know it but God and himself. God’s ‘commandment is exceeding broad,’¹ reaching even to ‘the thoughts and intents of the heart;’² and He says that it is as much a sin for a man to think over, or desire to do, a bad action in his heart, as it is to do it.”³

“Why, how can that be?” asked the nurse. “How can a man stand the same in God’s sight after he has committed a bad act, as when he only thought of doing it?”

¹ Psalm 119 : 96.

² Heb. 4 : 12. Rom. 2 : 16.

³ Matt. 5 : 28.

“God says, ‘Thou shalt not kill,’¹ and, ‘Whoso hateth his brother is a murderer.’²

“In *God’s sight*, the *sin of murder* is in the heart of a man who hates his brother, whether he kills that brother or not. If he kills him, he *adds* the sinful *act* to the sinful *thought*; he *adds another sin to the first*.

“Now, as long as he keeps that sin within the bounds of his own heart, it *affects* no one but *himself*. If he *adds* the sinful act to the sinful thought, it affects his *neighbour* too.

“Even human laws extend to that *sin of the heart*, as far as they can. A man may kill his neighbour, and, if he can prove it to have been done accidentally, or without design, the law only inflicts a comparatively slight punishment. But if it can be proved that he conceived and planned the act beforehand, ‘with malice aforethought,’ the penalty is death.

“Now, human laws extend only to our words and acts, or to so much of our thoughts as comes to the surface in our words and acts; because they have no power to go beyond that.

¹ Ex. 20 : 13.

² 1 John 3 : 15. Matt. 5 : 21, 22.

“They have no power to know what a man thinks, and no right to punish him for those thoughts as long as he keeps them *inside* of his own heart; but our *hearts* are as open to the eye of *God* as our *words* and *actions* to the *eyes* of *men*; and His law extends over even the faintest impulse or desire of the heart, or the most secret thought hidden away in our minds, *just as much* as to our words and actions. Is that true?”

“I don’t know. I suppose it is. That is cutting pretty close, though.”

“The *Bible cuts close*, friend. ‘The word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight; but all things are naked, and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.’¹

“It cuts closer yet, friend. God is our Law-giver and our Judge;² and He says that ‘The

¹ Heb. 4 : 12, 13.

² Isa. 33 : 22. James 4 : 12.

thought of foolishness is *sin*,¹ and '*All unrighteousness is sin*,² and '*Whatever is not of faith is sin*.'³

"And not only in a few passages, but the *whole tenor* of the teachings of the Bible goes to show that in His sight we are lost in sin,⁴ dead in sin;⁵ and it cuts away every particle of goodness from the natural heart,⁶ and shows us that while that heart remains as it is by nature we cannot by one act of our lives please God,⁷ and that, in His sight, every imagination of the thoughts of the natural heart is '*only evil*,' and that '*continually*.'⁸

"It cuts so close that even the best man that ever lived, when he searches his heart by the light of the law and Spirit, must stand guilty and ashamed before God,⁹ without one particle of his own goodness to offer Him,¹⁰ and is forced to hide behind the righteousness of Christ.¹¹

¹ Prov. 24 : 9.

² 1 John 5 : 17.

³ Rom. 14 : 23.

⁴ Matt. 18 : 11.

⁵ Eph. 2 : 1.

⁶ Psalm 14 : 1-4.

⁷ Heb. 11 : 6.

Rom. 8 : 8.

⁸ Gen. 6 : 5 ; 8 : 21.

⁹ Eccl. 7 : 20.

¹⁰ Matt. 19 : 17.

Isa. 64 : 6.

¹¹ Phil. 3 : 9.

“Now, we don’t *like* to believe such a thing as that. We naturally like to think well of ourselves; and, if our outward life comes up to our own standard of right, we shut our eyes to that sin of the heart, or count it a very little thing, and think ourselves good.

“But either the Bible *means what it says*, or it *means nothing*. Either it is the *rule* by which we are to *measure ourselves*, or we *have none*; and, if we look closely at *it*, we see that sins of the heart and mind, whether they come to the surface or not, are placed in the *very same condemnation* with sins of word and act.

“Take one example only: you will find it in the first chapter of Romans, where it speaks of men by nature as

“‘Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers,

“‘Backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,

“‘Without understanding, covenant-breakers,

without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful.'

"Now, at least one-half of the list are sins of the heart, which *may* be kept in the heart, hidden from the eyes of men, but which, generally, do produce a plentiful harvest of sinful words and acts.¹

"God says,² 'My son, give me thine *heart*.' 'Out of it are the issues of life.'³ If you give that to God, He will have every thing which proceeds from it.⁴

"Sin means 'a transgression of the law.'⁵ Let us see what are some of God's laws for the heart.

"'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.'⁶ Do you love God, friend?"

"I think I do,—some."

"Do you love your wife and little ones?" (He had just heard from them, the first time for months.)

¹ Mark 7 : 21-24.

² Prov. 23 : 26.

³ Prov. 4 : 23.

⁴ Luke 6 : 43-46.

⁵ 1 John 3 : 4. Rom. 4 : 4.

⁶ Matt. 22 : 37.

“Yes, indeed I do,” he said, emphatically; and the light and warmth came into his face at the thought of them.

“Did you think of them often in these past months?”

“Yes, indeed I did,—every day and hour of my life, almost.”

“You can have some idea of *how much* you *love God*, by comparing the feeling you have for Him with the feeling you have for the dear ones at home.

“You can tell something, too, by comparing the feeling you had when you read your wife’s letter to-day, with the feeling you had when you read *God’s letters* to you, in the Bible, after being without a Bible for so long.

“Do you pray to God every day, friend?”

“Not every day. I do sometimes, though.”

“Would your wife think you had much *love* for *her*, if you would be in her presence all the time and yet let *days* pass without *speaking* to her?”

“Or *could* you feel much love for her and yet only speak to her ‘*sometimes*’?”

“Now, God says you must love your wife as you do your own life.¹ She and your little ones should be dearer to you than any thing else on earth ; but God requires you to love *Him better* than any thing else in the world. ‘Thou shalt have no other gods before me,’² He says.

“Now, you say that you have kept the second great commandment, ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;’³ but ask your own heart if you have kept the *first* and *greatest*, as God requires you to keep it.

“‘God is a Spirit; and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.’⁴

“You say that you attended church regularly when you were at home; and so, as far as the *outer* man was concerned, you obeyed the order ‘not to forsake the assembling of yourselves together’⁵ for worship; but let us ask our own hearts (yours and mine by nature, friend) what they have been engaged in doing, too often, even in the house of God.

“Thinking of ourselves, of our friends, of

¹ Eph. 5 : 33.

² Ex. 20 : 3.

³ Matt. 22 : 37-40.

⁴ John 4 : 24.

⁵ Heb. 10 : 25.

our worldly affairs, of our plans for the future, of the persons sitting there with us, of matters in the world around us. *God* was very little in our thoughts.

“And even when we were standing or kneeling in prayer, either there or at home, how often have we drawn near to God with our lips, while our hearts were far from Him !¹

“Speaking the words, sometimes, almost without knowing what we were saying; and yet, as we came out of church, sometimes, and saw men who had not been there, idling in the streets, or seeking their own amusement, we have had a feeling as if we were at least some degrees nearer to God than they, although we had not, in reality, been *worshipping God* any more than they had been.

“When we have seen others do wrong, we have stood up, in our hearts, and said,—

“‘O God, I thank thee that I am not as *other* men, or even as this publican.’² And so we might appear to the eyes of men; but in

¹ Matt. 15 : 8.

² Luke 18 : 10-15.

the eye of God we stood in the very same condemnation with them,—sinners.

“You say that you are a *moral* man, friend ; and morality always waits upon religion ; but it can never be received as a *substitute* for it.

“You never knew an immoral Christian ; although you may have seen *professors* who were not moral.

“We owe all the morality there is in the world to the Bible ; but the only morality we can offer to God that will *please Him* must spring from the *right motive*.

“Of course, I do not know any thing about your heart or your past life, friend, except what you have told me yourself ; and I am only judging *you* by what I know of the natural heart, and what I have read about it in the Bible.

“It says there¹ that ‘the heart is *deceitful* above all things, and desperately wicked. Who can know it?’

“Now, we need to look at our hearts as they really are,—as they will stand in God’s sight

¹ Jer. 17 : 9.

in the judgment. It is not wise to try to deceive our own souls in a matter which involves an eternity. You should pray to God, earnestly, to give you His Spirit, to show you your heart as He sees it;—show you how much of your morality was *prompted* by a pure desire to please Him, and how much by a desire to appear well in the eyes of your fellow-men; how many times you were kept from doing wrong, not so much from the fear of offending God by doing what He had forbidden (if you thought of that at all), as by the fear of losing the good opinion of those around you, or the fear of bringing disgrace and trouble upon those you loved.

“God says,¹ ‘*If ye love me, keep my commandments.*’

“*That* is the reason why we should try to do right,—because God tells us to do so and we love to obey Him.² Why should we try to keep from doing what God has forbidden? Because we *love God* and fear to disobey Him.³ Any other motive is an *earthly* motive, and can

¹ John 14 : 15.

² John 14 : 23.

³ 2 Cor. 7 : 1.

never please God. More than that, it displeases Him, because it shuts out the Saviour.¹

“What are you going to do with those sins of word and act (not to say any thing about the thoughts and desires), that you know you have committed against God already, friend?

“If you should go in debt to this comrade here, you might save enough from your future earnings to repay him what you owed him; but you never can earn more goodness than you need, and take the surplus to pay your debt to God.

“You can never do *more* than right at any one moment; and you owe full and perfect obedience to God for every moment of your life; and without that perfect holiness ‘no man can see the Lord’ in peace.²

“Your plan has no *Saviour* in it, friend.

“You are virtually saying to God, ‘I am good enough to go into heaven as I am.’

“You are saying to Jesus, ‘There was no *need* of your suffering for me. I can work my own way into heaven.’

¹ Gal. 2 : 21 ; 5 : 4.

² Heb. 12 : 14.

“You are saying to the Spirit, ‘I do not need you to change my heart, and to help me to do right, and to keep me from doing wrong. My heart is good enough as it is, and I am able of myself to do all that is needful.’

“*Your plan is not God’s plan, friend.* You could not possibly get into heaven that way. God says¹ that ‘By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight.’

“A young man came to Jesus, while He was upon the earth, asking what he should do that he might inherit eternal life;² and he told Christ that he had kept all the commandments that related to his fellow-men, ‘from his youth;’ but the Saviour told him, ‘One thing thou lackest.’ He had not given his heart to God.

“Paul was a Pharisee, blameless in the law of works;³ and yet that would not save him. Christ says⁴ that ‘Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.’

¹ Rom. 3 : 20. Eph. 2 : 8.

² Mark 10 : 17-23.

³ Phil. 3 : 6.

⁴ Matt. 5 : 20.

“The road you are travelling is *not* the road to heaven at all, friend, even though you *could* walk in it without stumbling. It does *not lead there*, any more than the path of the openly wicked; although to the eyes of the world it *looks more like* the ‘strait and narrow path.’¹

“The road by which *you* are trying to find heaven was *blocked up long ago*,² friend, and a new and living way³ opened to us, by which only we can enter in and be saved.”⁴

And then we had a little talk about the way of life through a crucified Redeemer; and, before I left, both he and the German promised that they would seek the Holy Spirit to help them to accept God’s plan of salvation, and give themselves to Jesus.

While I was in that same part of the ward, the following week, the nurse came up to me again.

He had been thinking and praying a great deal, he told me. He had seen himself to be a

¹ Matt. 7 : 14.

² Gen. 2 : 17.

³ Heb. 10 : 20. Rom. 5 : 12-20.

⁴ John 14 : 6. Acts 4 : 12.

sinner in God's sight, and had gone to Christ for pardon.

"And do you think that God has, for Christ's sake, pardoned your sins and clothed you in Christ's righteousness?"¹

"I hope He has. I hope I am not trusting in any thing else than Jesus now."

"And this friend?" (turning to the German on his cot, near us. I was just going to speak to him as the nurse came up; and he had heard what we said.)

"I tried to give myself to Jesus, too, and I think He took me."

"Oh, I am so glad!—so glad!"

On my next visit the German had gone to his regiment, and I never saw him again; but the nurse was in the ward for a long time.

We had several talks afterwards; and he told me that the more he looked into his own heart the more full of sin it seemed to him. God's Spirit showed him more and more, every day, how mistaken he was when he thought himself

¹ Rom. 3 : 22.

good, and how much he needed some other righteousness than his own before he could please God.

He was exchanged at last, and went home on furlough, to see the wife and little ones he loved so dearly,—and from there, I suppose, went directly to his regiment, as he did not return again to the B—— Hospital.

A heathen Indian, when he heard for the first time of salvation through Christ, offered his wampum to buy a pardon for his sins.

No, the missionary told him, he could not have it for that.

He went away, but returned again, offering his gun and the skins he had taken in hunting.

No: those would not do, either.

Once more he came back, offering his wigwam, his wife, his children,—all that he had.

No, the missionary told him, that would not do, still. He could not buy a pardon with them.

Poor Indian! That was his worldly all,—given up with many a secret struggle, perhaps;

but his sins troubled him sorely, and he wanted pardon and peace.

He stood in silence, busy with his own heart, for a little while, and then, looking up, said, "Indian give Jesus Christ *himself*!"

And that was just what the Saviour wanted. He asks nothing more, He will take nothing less, than our whole selves.

There is many an Ananias, or a Sapphira,¹ in the world, who would be willing to give up a *part* to God, if they might keep back a part for themselves.

"I will give God my actions. I will abstain from any vice or bad habits, or give up any that I may have contracted, and attend church regularly, and try to conform in my outward life to the rules of the Bible, and deal honestly and kindly with my fellow-men. Won't that do?"

And the answer is, "My son, give me thy *heart*."

"I will refrain my lips from speaking evil. I will use my lips to pray. I will give my

¹ Acts 5 : 1-11.

words, and my actions too. Surely that is enough. I do not want to give up the thoughts and affections of my heart."

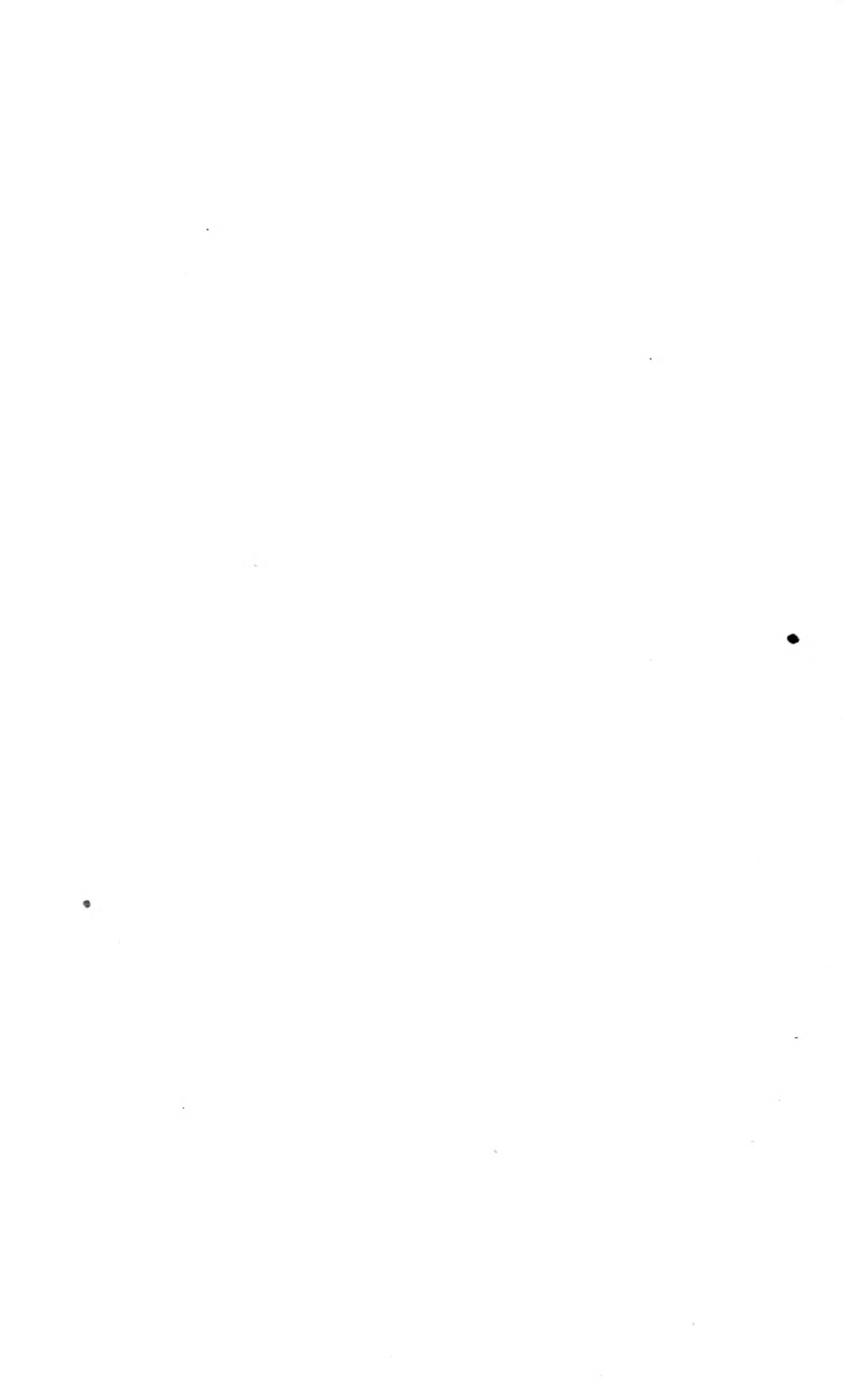
And the answer is, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts."¹ "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God."² "Him only shalt thou serve."³ "Give me thy heart;" and if we give that to God, He will have our words, and our actions too.

¹ Isa. 55 : 7.

² Matt. 22 : 37.

³ Matt. 4 : 10.

THE
CAVILLER AT THE CHURCH
AND
CHURCH-MEMBERS.



THE
CAVILLER AT THE CHURCH AND
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ON my visit to the — Hospital, one day, while Miss Oliver, a young lady who had accompanied me, was talking to some of the sick men in Ward B, I slipped quietly into C, a small adjoining ward for those who were afflicted with sore eyes.

I stood for a moment inside of the door, and glanced around. There were only three patients in the room, I could see by the light which came straggling in through the door opening into B. (The blinds were all closed, to exclude the sunshine.) One of them was lying on his cot, with his face turned to the wall, apparently asleep. The other two were sitting close together, near the middle of the room, with their heads resting on their hands.

As they raised their heads at the sound of my step, I saw that they were both new-comers. They were well enough, except their eyes, they told me; and those were almost blinded by disease caused by hardships and exposure under the burning sun of the South.

"I think I would rather be deaf, or dumb, or lame, or any thing else, than blind," I said, when they had finished telling me their stories. "I want to see the faces of my friends, and look on the world I live in; and then, when you have your eyesight, you can read, or amuse or interest yourself, even if you have to remain always in one place. But you can do nothing all day but sit still, and talk, and think; and you get tired of talking, unless you have a great many very interesting subjects to talk about; and then you can only think, and suffer."

"Yes, it is hard," said the older of the two, a middle-aged man,—with threads of gray mingling with his dark hair, as I could see,—on the side nearest to the door. "It's harder than to be sick, even. I sleep as much of the time as I can; but still the days are so long and

lonesome, it seems as if they never would go past."

"You can do a great deal of thinking these days, when you have nothing else to do. Can't you?"

"Yes: more than I want to, sometimes."

"A man needs to have pleasant thoughts for company at such a time. He needs to have a stock of comfort laid up in his heart, when he can't get it from any thing around him. Is that your case, friend?"

"Not very much comfort, these days, in my heart, or any place else."

"Have you the grace of God in your heart, and the love of Christ, and the 'Comforter' that He promised to send to His children? If a man has these, he can be happy anywhere. Isn't that true, friend?" I said, appealing to the younger soldier.

"Yes, indeed it is so."

"Do you know that by your own experience?"

"Yes: I hope so. If I hadn't that hope, I don't know what I would do now."

"And this comrade: is he a Christian too?"

"No: I can't say that I am."

"*Why* are you not one, friend?"

I had to wait a moment for an answer, and then it came slowly.

"Well, for one thing, there are so many different religions in the world, that a man don't know which one to believe."

"What do you mean by 'different religions'? I don't understand. Is it the Christian, Mohammedan, Pagan, &c.?"

"No. I mean so many different churches in this country; and they all profess to be founded on the Bible, and bring Bible proofs for what they believe, and every one thinks that *his* way is right, and that every one else is wrong, and yet their ways are all so different. A man can't tell what to think, or which one to believe."

"What regiment do you belong to, friend?" I asked, as I drew up a hospital stool and seated myself near them.

"The 8th ——."

"Were you ever in camp for any length of time with several other regiments?"

"Oh, yes, several times: there were nearly a

dozen different regiments in our camp down in ——."

"Well, let us suppose that there was your Regiment, the 8th ——, and the 7th New York, and the 6th Minnesota, and the 5th Virginia, and the 4th Kansas, &c. &c.,—men gathered from all parts of the country, and from almost every nation in the world, and thrown together, for the time being, in one place. Part of them were infantry, part cavalry; and then there were light-artillerymen, batteries, &c. Now, I suppose that no two of those regiments had uniforms exactly alike. Had they?"

"Well, no; not just exactly."

"There was always a little difference, so that you could tell what regiment a man belonged to, when you saw him. Sometimes the difference was in the cut of their coats, or the shape of their hats or caps. Sometimes it was only a little difference in the trimmings or the badges. Sometimes two of them were so nearly alike that you thought them the same, until you looked at the badges on their caps; while you could tell infantry from cavalry and artillery—

men as far as you could see them. Couldn't you?"

"Yes."

"But there were *three things* about them *exactly alike*, always. They all wore the blue. They all belonged to the U. S. A. And they were all out in the service of their country. Isn't that true?"

"Yes."

"Now, the different Christian churches,—I mean by 'Christian' those that found their hopes for heaven on the Rock Christ Jesus, as He is offered to us in the gospel. Those who deny His divinity, or build upon any thing else than Christ and Him crucified, have no *right* to the name of *Christ-ians*,—all these different churches are only different regiments in the Lord's army on earth.

"Their 'badges' (or names) may be different; they may have different forms of church government, and they may differ on points of doctrine which are not essential to salvation; but they all have the *same creed* (as you will see, if you examine their church books). They

all rally around the 'Banner of the cross,' and follow the *One* great 'Captain of their salvation;' ¹ and, if they are His true soldiers, they are all fighting against sin and Satan, in the one common cause of Christ. Do you understand?"

"Yes. But what is the use of so many different churches? Why couldn't they as well all be in one?"

"What was the *use* of so many different regiments in the U. S. A.? Don't you suppose that Government had wise reasons for breaking it up into regiments and divisions? So, God, for wise reasons, has permitted the church, in His earthly government, to be composed of different regiments and divisions, of which Christ is the commander-in-chief.² They are all different members of the same body, of which Christ is the 'head.'³

"I know that those different denominations are often brought up as an objection to the church; but I think that that is a mistake. I think

¹ Heb. 2 : 9, 10.

² Isa. 55 : 4.

³ 1 Cor. 12 : 12-31. Rom. 12 : 4, 5. Col. 1 : 18.

that, instead of being an objection, they are a great advantage, rather; and I will tell you why.

“When you were down there in camp, men from the same part of the country, and so with tastes and habits more nearly alike, were generally thrown together in the same regiment, and so there was apt to be more harmony among themselves. Is that true?”

“Yes, as a general thing.”

“Then, on review-days, especially when you had visitors, each regiment had a kind of pride as to which would make the best appearance; and each man in it would brighten up his arms and uniform, so as not to bring discredit upon his regiment in the presence of the others. As a general thing, you were in less danger of falling into careless habits than if your regiment had been there alone, and there had not been something of this spirit of rivalry. One regiment acted as a *spur* on the others: didn't it?”

“Yes: I believe it did.”

“Then, too, a regiment was more careful in

its actions, because it knew that the others were watching it. You acted as a *check* upon each other, too, didn't you?"

"Yes, I think so."

"Now, men, even after they become Christians, are still of a great variety of tastes and temperaments; and the different *branches* of the church give men of similar tastes and temperaments the opportunity of uniting together, and thus secures greater harmony among themselves, for one thing.

"Then, too, the church is always on review, under its Captain's eye, and it knows that the world is always a spectator; and so its different branches act as a *spur* upon each other; and if that spirit of rivalry is prompted by a pure desire for the glory and interests of Christ's kingdom, and zeal to see who will do the most for His cause, it is all right.

"Then, too, the churches act as a *check* upon each other. There is one church which has kept itself in one church only, and it does not recognize any other church as a critic; and, as a consequence, all manner of heresies, and abuses,

and superstitions, have crept into it, and stay in it, and grow.

“But the Protestant church, divided as it is into different denominations, and each denomination knowing that the others are watching it and criticizing it, has to be more careful; and if any heresy creeps into one, the others expose it to the world at once; and, if the church still clings to the error, it is cast out of the sisterhood, and takes its rank among the ‘isms.’ And so the church of Christ, as a body, is kept purer than it would otherwise be.

“For instance: suppose that a Methodist minister preaches some strange doctrine. If the Methodist church does not check him, the Presbyterian, or Lutheran, or Baptist, or some other denomination, takes him up, and exposes him to the world, and censures the Methodist church for keeping him in it; and so that church, for the sake of its own reputation, has to check him.

“Suppose that a Presbyterian or a Baptist journal prints some wrong doctrine. If its own church does not correct it, a Methodist, or

Episcopalian, or Congregational, or some other church paper, holds it up before the eye of the world, and censures it, until it is silenced; and so it can do less mischief than it otherwise could. Isn't that true?"

"Yes; they *do* watch each other pretty closely, that's a fact; and that is one thing I blame them for: they get to quarrelling among themselves, sometimes, and running each other down. Why, sometimes they act as if they hated each other worse than they did us outsiders,—as if they didn't believe there was a *Christian* in any other church than their own."

"If you had quarrelled and fought with soldiers in other regiments, while you were in camp, or on the march together, and treated them as if you thought that they were not true soldiers because they did not belong to the 8th —, would it have been because there were different regiments there, or because you yourself were a bad man, and there were bad men in the others who would quarrel with you?"

"The fault would have been with them and me, I suppose."

“Yes. Suppose that fifty men out of each regiment should commence quarrelling, and fighting, and killing each other: the fault would be, *not* because the army was divided into regiments, but because there were those fifty *bad men* in each. And it would be a very great wrong in them to act so, outside of the sin to themselves and against each other; because, when there is division in the camp, they spend the strength in fighting each other, that they ought to spend against the enemy, and so weaken themselves, and give the enemy the advantage; and they would not do that if they had the real interest of their cause at heart. And, besides, those fifty men bring disgrace upon the whole regiment, in the eyes of the world, although every one of the other nine hundred and fifty may be a good man.

“I have known a whole regiment to be marched out in disgrace, with their colours trailing, for the fault of a fewer number than that; although I knew many of the others, and knew that they were good men, and had no hand in the wrong; and yet they had to suffer, in the eyes of the

lookers-on, for the sin of their comrades. Isn't that true?"

"Yes, I suppose so."

"Now, this division, and quarrelling, and envying, in the church, is *not* because the church is divided into different branches, but because there are *bad* (as well as good) *men* in *each* of them. And they were in it as far back as the time of Paul;¹ and he commands us to 'avoid such men, for they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ.' They are not His true disciples; they do not have the interests of His cause at heart, as they should, or they would not thus wound Him in the house of His friends, and bring reproach upon His cause in the presence of His enemies.

"And Satan, and the world, rejoice at divisions in the camp of the church; because it draws off the strength that should be used to resist them, and gives them the opportunity, while the church is occupied with its own quarrels, to plant their

¹ 1 Cor. 1:11-14. 1 Cor. 3:3, 4. 1 Cor. 1:10. Rom. 16:17, 18. Acts 15:1. Phil. 3:3. Rom. 2:29.

batteries a little nearer to it, without being observed, and so gain an advantage.

“Now, such strife between churches is very wrong,—a very great wrong; but it does not spring from the fact that the church is divided into different branches; but from the carnal hearts in each, who care more for their own church than they do for the glory and interests of Christ’s kingdom on earth,—the selfish, sinful hearts, who care more for what is ‘mine’ than they do for what is ‘Christ’s.’”

“But how do such men get into the church? I thought the churches you call ‘orthodox’ would not take any one into them unless they professed what is called a ‘change of heart;’ and yet I have known plenty of church-members that had no more religion about them than *I* have. Why, I’ve seen them—plenty of times—do things that *I* wouldn’t do; and I don’t pretend to be a Christian.”

“Let us see if we can think how some of them got into the church.

“When the war first broke out, don’t you remember what excitement and enthusiasm

there were all over the country? How popular soldiers were then! how regiments were cheered and welcomed as they passed! The *current* of *popular* feeling ran into the army, and it carried many a one into camp and battle-field, who did not go there from pure patriotism, even although some may have mistaken the feeling that prompted them for that at the time. Do you believe that?"

"Yes; I do."

"Then, after the war began, some men went into the army to save their property, or for some personal gain or interest; some, because they were expected to go, or because the most of their companions had gone, and they would be despised by many if they should remain at home; some, for fear they would be drafted, or from a great variety of motives, which they knew themselves were not patriotism. Is that true?"

"Yes; I believe it."

"Now, Government could not look into those men's hearts and say, 'You are not prompted by the right motive,—you are not a true sol-

dier.' It had to take a man on his *profession* of desire to serve his country. But when such came to meet the realities and hardships of the war, these were the class of men your 'deserters' came from. But, even if the fear of the disgrace or punishment of desertion kept them still in the army, they had no real love for their country in their hearts. You could tell that by the way they talked and acted."

"That's true: I have seen such men myself."

"But then it wouldn't be right to judge the *whole army* by *that* class, or to make their being in it an excuse for your not enlisting: would it?"

"No."

"There would be all the more need that you should be a true soldier; and your personal duty to be that would still be as great as if there were no such men in the army: wouldn't it?"

"I suppose so."

"Now, at the time of what are called 'revivals of religion,' a great many become true Christians, no doubt; but there is very often,

at such seasons, in all churches, something of excitement, or of a feeling that is not true religion; although many who are under its influence may really think that their feelings are caused by true love for God. The *popular current* runs into the *church*, and many drift along with it who have no *right* to be numbered among God's children. They show that by their lives afterwards. That is the class that the most of what are called 'backsliders' come from.

"Then, too, I think we would not judge wrongly, if we should say that men often deceive themselves by *thinking* that they have 'experienced religion,' as they call it, at other seasons, besides in revivals, when in reality they know nothing at all about it. Some, through wilful ignorance, because they do not examine the *foundation* of their hopes as they should, may go up to the judgment-seat with that false impression;¹ but others, although they may find out their mistake, regard for their friends, or the dread of disgrace, may keep them in the

¹ Matt. 7 : 21-24.

ranks of the church ; but their lives show to the world that they are not really God's children. Some go into it, too, because when they become old enough their friends expect them to unite with the church.

“I think we should not judge wrongly, either, if we should say that motives of worldly interest sometimes take a man into a church who has no right to be there. You will find the most of your inconsistent and worldly professors in these last classes ; but they are *not Christians*, although they may wear that name.

“Now, those who received such men into the church could not look into their hearts and say, ‘You are not a true Christian. You have no *right* here.’ God only can judge the *heart*. The church can only accept a man on his *profession* of change of heart and faith in Christ, and so is liable to number *false* professors among the *true*.

“But it is wrong to bring up such men as a reproach upon the true soldiers of the cross ; and you have been watching them closely enough to see where they do wrong, and take

warning,—have been reading them more attentively than you have read your Bible, perhaps; and you have a very good idea of how a Christian ought to live, and it would be wise in you to set such men an example.

“Me! Why, I don’t profess to be a Christian! I don’t make any profession of religion.”

“I know. But you *ought* to *profess* it, and *possess* it too. You *know* that.

“Will you tell me this, friend? What *claim* have *I* on you, that *you* should set me an *example*?”

“On me! Why, not any.”

“What *right* have *I* to *expect* or *claim* an example from *you*?”

“Why, none at all.”

“And yet I have *just* as *much right* to *expect* or *claim* one from *you*, as *you* from *me*. The fact of my *professing* to be a Christian, while you do not, does not alter the case. No man living has a right to claim an example from another,—not even from his *minister*.”

“Why, I thought some of these men pretended to have a ‘call.’”

“*Not* to be an *example* for *you*, friend. God ‘calls’ no man living to do that; neither do His children profess it. But, He gives to every man such gifts as He pleases; some for one thing, some for another, as He sees best.¹

“If He gives to one talent and opportunity for preaching or teaching, and he does not use that gift, ‘every one according to his several ability,’² or abuses it, or mistakes it, he is accountable for it *to God, not to man*. And when the day of reckoning comes, he will have to ‘render an account’ of it to his Lord, just as *you* will have to ‘render an account’ to your God for the time and talents and opportunities, whatever they were, that He has been giving you all these long years, and which you have wasted, or not improved, or used in the service of Satan.

“That is such a strange idea that so many have,—this watching professors of religion and making *their* hypocrisy or sin an excuse for their own sinning, and claiming an ‘example’ from

¹ Eph. 4 : 11. 1 Pet. 4 : 10, 11.

² Matt. 25 : 15. Rom. 12 : 6-8.

them, and feeling as if they were wronged if they do not always get it.

“You will see it in the same family, sometimes, among those who have had *equal opportunities* for studying God’s word and knowing their own duty.

“When one of their number—not always the oldest, even—makes a profession of religion, the others keep watching closely; and if he or she does not always come up to *their* idea of how a Christian *ought* to live, they say, with a sneer, ‘There’s your *Christian* for you;’ and they rejoice over the fault, and have a self-satisfied feeling, as if another’s wrong-doing was an excuse for *their* sin, or excused *them* from doing right.

“Sometimes they bring it up as an argument *against* religion, too, or as an excuse for their not professing it; when in reality that feeling which they have in their hearts is one of the *strongest arguments in proof* of the *purity and power* of the Christian religion.

“Why, nobody makes any ado about an *infidel* doing wrong! They do not *expect* any *good*

from his principles; while they *do* expect that religion in the heart of a man will bring forth *good fruits* in his life.

“You have read the Bible often, I suppose, while you could read?”

“Yes.”

“God has drawn *one perfect example*¹ in that for you to follow, and *only one*,—the Lord Jesus. That is all you *need*, and all He gives you any right to expect. You are not required to follow a Paul, even, except as he followed Christ.² Neither is Paul, or any one who has ever lived, required to set an example for you, except so far as their duty to God requires them to use God’s own gifts to them for the advancement of Christ’s kingdom in the hearts of men.³ Our duty to *man* springs out of our duty to *God*,—has its foundation *only* in the *obedience* which we owe to *His* commands.

“Let us see how your excuse would work in worldly matters. Suppose some one should

¹ 1 Pet. 2 : 21, 22. John 13 : 15. Matt. 11 : 29. 1 John 2 : 6. Heb. 7 : 26.

² 1 Cor. 11 : 1.

³ 1 Cor. 9 : 4-7, 19-24.

come into this room, now, and offer you a ten-dollar gold piece,—pure gold you knew it was. I think you would be very foolish to refuse it because this comrade had a *counterfeit* ten-dollar piece in his pocket: wouldn't you?"

"Yes."

"You believe that there *is* such a thing as *true* religion? You have seen those you believed to be true Christians: haven't you?"

"Yes,—a few."

"*One* such would be *sufficient proof* that there is true religion in existence, and that you too could obtain it.

"Counterfeit Christians are only another proof of this, because men cannot counterfeit any thing which does not exist; and you are not wise to refuse what you know to be true religion, because somebody else has its counterfeit. But you do not act on this principle in worldly matters.

"How many little children have you at home, friend?"

"Four."

"You have some thriftless, perhaps drunken,

neighbour, who neglects or abuses his children, and lets them grow up in idleness and want and sin?"

"Yes."

"You would not plead his example as an excuse for your neglecting or abusing your own dear little ones. 'No,' you say; 'I must provide for my own family, and try to raise them aright, no matter what my neighbour may do to his.' You would look upon him as a *warning*, rather than an *example*.

"So must you attend to your own soul's salvation, no matter what your neighbours may do. Their wrong-doing should warn you *from* wrong, rather than excuse you in it.

"Again, suppose that this comrade should go out into Ward B, now, and kill one of the sick men there; you go out after him, and kill another. You are both arrested and brought to trial for doing so. You plead, 'This comrade did so. He professes to be a Christian, and I thought that that would excuse me.'

"You know better. Such a plea as that would not excuse you at the bar of your coun-

try; neither will it excuse you at the bar of your God."

"But wouldn't it be a *worse* sin in *him* to do such a thing than for *me*?"

"The laws of your country would not make any such distinction, when you knew as well as he did, that you were doing wrong. They would hold you *both equally accountable*; and so do the laws of your God. I cannot find any such distinction made in the Bible; and that is the 'law that you are to be judged by.'¹

"I read there, not, 'The *Christian* shall not kill,' but 'Thou'—whoever you are, professor or non-professor—'shalt not kill.' Not, 'If the Christian bears false witness against his neighbour, or swears, so may the sinner;' but 'Thou shalt not bear false witness.' 'Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold *him* [any one] guiltless that taketh His name in vain.'²

"That is such a strange idea which so many have, that God's laws are not as binding on them, and their sins are less sinful in His sight,

¹ Rom. 2 : 12-17.

² Ex. 20 : 3-18.

because they do not have on the uniform of some church. That they are at more liberty to sin *before* they profess to be a Christian than they are after it.

“The only difference between you and this comrade, in the case we have mentioned, would be this: if he was a true Christian, he would not act so. And when he and you stood at the bar of God, he would have the sins of perjury (in his church-vows) and hypocrisy to answer for, besides the sin of murder. You would have the sin of murder, and the sins of open disobedience to God, and neglect of, and contempt for, His ordinances. And, if this comrade’s hypocrisy should have been a ‘stumbling-block’ in the way of others to Christ, and a reproach upon His cause, *your* indifference to God, and cavillings at what belongs to Him, have had their influence in keeping others back from the Saviour, too.

“I will tell you what I think, friend. If the gates of heaven are closed to me on that last day, I don’t believe that it will make any difference to me *what kind* of sins closed them,

if I have to stand outside while the redeemed pass by me into heaven, and I know that I could so easily have been among their number.

“I don’t think it will give me the least comfort, then, if I should see thousands of false professors standing with me, or that it will make much difference, whether I am standing nearer to the gate than they, or farther from it, if I have the certainty in my heart that it has closed on me forever.

“Let us suppose that that day has come, and that you have gone up to that judgment-seat (as you will have to go some day, whether you are ready for it or not), and you are standing there among all who have ever lived, or will live, to the end of time.¹

“This world has passed away, with all that belonged to it.² The church, in this world, was only an institution of God’s government on earth. It has fulfilled the purpose for which He organized it, and it too has passed away.

“Whether you had your name written on *its*

¹ Rev. 6 : 15-17.

² Rev. 21 : 1.

books or not, will make little difference to you then. The question will be, 'Is your name written in the Lamb's Book of Life'?¹ That only will save you, *that day*.

"All the wealth and honors and power that men had here, belonged to this earth, and have perished with it,² leaving only the responsibility for the use that was made of them, upon the souls of those who owned them.³

"You glance around. You see Queen Victoria on the same platform with the poorest of her subjects; the President beside the humblest citizen; the minister beside the lowliest of his flock.

"Each soul stripped of every covering which it wore in the eyes of men.⁴ Every soul naked and open to the eye of God and angels and men, standing side by side on the same level,—just as every soul stands on the same level, and on the same platform, in *God's sight now*.⁵

¹ Rev. 20 : 12-15. Rev. 21 : 27. ² 1 Tim. 6 : 7.

³ Matt. 25 : 14-31.

⁴ Eccl. 12 : 14. Ps. 44 : 21. Matt. 16 : 27.

⁵ Rom. 2 : 11. Eph. 6 : 9. Col. 3 : 25. Acts 10 : 10.

“You find yourself placed at the left hand,¹ when you are called upon to ‘render up your accounts.’

“God’s eye is looking into your naked soul as it has been looking down into it all these years. *How will you answer Him?*

“Will you say, ‘There were so many different churches, I didn’t know which was right’?² God had put the *Bible* into your hands to teach you *right* from *wrong*, and show you the road³ to heaven.

“You see beside you some false professors, and you say, ‘They did not set me a good example.’ Christ, your *great Exemplar*, is your *Judge*.⁴ He warned you of such, while He lived on the earth, and left ‘orders’ for you *not* to *follow* them.⁵

“You say, ‘I thought their sin would excuse mine.’ Why, friend, you *knew*, even while you watched them upon the earth, that they were on the road to the left hand.’ And you knew that God had told you⁶ that ‘Every one of us shall

¹ Matt. 25 : 31-46.

² Heb. 4 : 13. Jer. 23 : 24.

³ John 14 : 6 ; 10 : 9.

⁴ Acts 17 : 31.

⁵ Matt. 7 : 15-24.

⁶ Rom. 14 : 12.

give account of *himself* to God,' that, at that judgment-seat, 'every one shall receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad,'¹ and that He 'will render to every man according to his deeds.'² There will be no 'refuge of lies'³ for you to creep into, that day. It will matter nothing to you what wrong others have done, unless you have helped them to do it; then you will have to answer for that too.

"Such excuses will not do then, friend; and it is not wise to try to quiet your conscience now with any thing that will not stand in God's sight that day.

"And there is the real trouble with you to-day. You are fighting against God's Spirit. It has touched your conscience, and made you feel that you are a sinner, and you are not willing to give up your sins, and so you are trying to throw the blame on the church, or on professing Christians, and you are glad when you can detect an error in them, as if that made your sin the less. But it will not do, friend;

¹ 2 Cor. 5 : 16.

² Rom. 2 : 6.

³ Isa. 28 : 15, 17.

you know it will not do," I said, as I rose to leave.

"Let me beseech you, in Christ's stead, as though He Himself did plead with you by us; throw away all these empty excuses, which will not answer you when you come into *His* presence, and 'be ye reconciled to God,' *now*."¹

I saw him several times in the weeks that followed this, but only for a few moments at a time; enough to show me that the Holy Spirit was doing His 'law-work'² in his heart, showing him his sins, and making him feel his need of a Saviour, and drawing him to Jesus; and when that is the case with one who knows his duty as well as he did, the Spirit is the best teacher. Words sometimes do harm.

His eyes were growing dimmer all the time, too,—poor man!—shutting him out more completely from the world, and giving the light of the Spirit better opportunity to show him the inner chambers of his soul.

At last, one day, as I was going through a sick ward in another part of the building, I

¹ 2 Cor. 5 : 20.

² Gal. 3 : 24, 25. John 16 : 8, 9.

caught a glimpse of the side of his face on a cot, a little distance from me.

He was sitting quietly, with his knapsack on the floor, at his feet; and such a look of contentment about the lines of his mouth, as his profile stood out from the white walls of the ward,—a look so changed that I could not help hoping it was traced there by a heart at peace with God.

He had a narrow bandage, or shade (I forget which), over his eyes; but I have not forgotten the pleased start and quick turning of his head at the sound of my voice, as I stopped to speak with a comrade near him.

“I am so *glad* you came to-day,” he said, holding out his hand, as I came up and spoke to him. “I got my discharge this morning, and am going home to-morrow; and I wanted so much to see you before I left.”

“You have good news to tell me?”

“Yes, I hope so.” And it *was* “good news” I listened to, as I sat down on the cot beside him, while he told me what “great things God had done for his soul.”

I think that there is no sweeter, purer pleasure, outside of the love of Christ in our own souls, than comes into the heart at such a moment as that. And I think I have seldom rejoiced with any one more than I did with this blind brother at my side, as we glanced over some of the evidences we can have of a change of heart, and found the answering marks in his soul (if his heart did not deceive him).

It was so sad to think of such as he had been, passing a long, weary night of years on earth, perhaps, with no comfort in his heart, and no heaven to go into when it was ended.

For he was almost entirely blind now.

"I can scarcely tell day from night, now," he told me. "And the doctor says he can't do any thing more for my eyes. I shall never see with them in this world any more."

"But you will open them again in heaven, you hope; and you can carry that hope with you in your heart all the way there. Oh, I am so glad!—so glad!"

"Yes," he said, quietly, "I *knew* you would be; but you can't be half as glad as I am."

We talked a little of the duties of his new life.

“What can you do for the Master, brother, when you go home?”

“Well, I have been thinking I could do something for Him in my own family, perhaps. My wife is a good woman, and we have a little home of our own, and God will provide for them and me some way. But I have been a very wicked man [I had thought as much], and never cared much for my own soul, or theirs either, while I was with them. And I have been thinking how I had neglected my children; and I thought I would get them to read the Bible and other good books to me; and we could talk about what we read, and perhaps God would help me to teach them to love Jesus, too.”

“Yes: try to take every one of them on the road to heaven with you. If you are not to look into their faces here any more, wouldn't it be pleasant to look upon them all next in the presence of that dear, pitying Saviour who opened the eyes of the blind when He lived on earth? There will be no *blind men* in that

‘happy land,’ brother! Only a little while, and, if you ‘endure to the end’ of the way, you have His promise that ‘Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty. They shall behold the land that is very far off,¹ and ‘there is no night there.’² ‘Thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself; for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended.’”³

¹ Isa. 33 : 17.² Rev. 22 : 5.³ Isa. 60 : 20.

“CAN’T UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE.”



CAN'T UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE.

THE Soldiers' Reading-Room, in the rooms of the central office of the United States Christian Commission in —, was adjoining the packing-room; and very often, when I was in the latter, selecting reading-matter, and such articles as I needed for the wards, soldiers would stroll in through the open door, and stand, and look around,—sometimes with such a wistful look on their faces, as if they were in trouble and wanted some one to speak to them.

Whenever any such came up, and stood near me, for any length of time, I always felt that God sent him,—that I had a message from the Master, to his soul; and, no matter how great my haste might be, I must wait to see what it was.

One day, while I was busy behind the counter, a soldier came up, and stood on the opposite side, near me.

He was one of the city guards, I could see by his dress and arms,—off duty for an hour or two,—and had strolled into the rooms, to pass away the time, or perhaps seek counsel or comfort.

I waited until I had nearly finished, and still he stood there.

“Have you a ‘Guide-book’ for the road, friend?” I said, turning to him, as I took down a small Bible from the shelf.

“Oh, yes; I brought a Bible from home, and I have carried it with me ever since.”

“Are you walking in the ‘way’ it points out?”

“I am afraid not.”

“What road are you travelling, friend?”

“Well, I don’t know,” he said. “Not the one marked out for me in the Bible, I’m afraid.”

“Suppose your captain should order you to go to Washington City, and should give you a guide-book, with every step of the

way plainly marked out in it, and you should carry it in your pocket, and perhaps take it out, and read it every day, and yet keep walking directly in the road to New Orleans. What good would studying the guide-book do you?"

"Not any good at all."

"What would you think of a man who would carry a copy of the laws of the United States in his pocket, and read them over every little while, and yet break those laws every day and hour of his life,—break some of them even while he was reading the law forbidding him to do so?"

"I should think that it was very wrong, as well as foolish, in him. Reading the laws would do no good, unless he obeyed them."

"Now, we *ought* to read God's laws in the Bible, and study them, too, a great deal; but *reading* the Bible will do no good, unless we *do* what it tells us."

"Yes; that's true. I do think a great deal about these things," he said, after a pause. "I have done it, at times, all my life; but, when-

ever I do, I get so bewildered, I scarcely know what is right, or what to think, sometimes."

"What are some of the things that trouble you? Perhaps I can help you a little."

"Well, there is one thing that I never could understand," he said, slowly. "It is this. If God foreordained *all* things, then He must have *foreordained sin*; and if He foreordained sin, then am *I accountable* for sinning?"

"Did you ever study geometry, friend?"

"Yes; a little," he said, looking up in surprise at such a question, then.

"Let me give you an 'axiom,' to carry in your mind always, friend; and it will help you to demonstrate such propositions as that. It is this:—

"*There is no sin independent of God's law. Keeping God's law makes right; breaking God's law makes wrong.*¹ Is that true?"

"Yes: I suppose so."

"Nothing is, for you, a sin '*per se*,' or in itself. You cannot conceive of a right or wrong independent of God's law.² It is only sin, as it

¹ 1 John 3 : 4. Rom. 4 : 15. ² Rom. 3 : 20. Rom. 7 : 7.

does not agree with what He has commanded, or does what He has forbidden.¹ God's law is like this, —————," I said, drawing a straight line on a little book lying on the counter. "God says,² '*This is the way: walk ye in it.*' If you do not come up to the line (or, omit duty³), you disobey Him, and, so, sin. If you overstep it (or commit wrong⁴), you disobey Him, and, so, sin. Is that true?"

"I think so."

"God is absolute 'Jehovah-tsidkenu,'⁵ 'The Lord our righteousness,' the Supreme Lawgiver⁶ of the Universe, Himself.

"There is no one higher than He, to give Him laws;⁷ no one greater, who has the *power* to make laws for Him, or the *right* to claim His obedience.⁸ Consequently, He *cannot violate* law; because it does not exist for Him.

"Consequently, He *cannot sin*; for 'sin is a transgression of the law;'⁹ and 'where no law

¹ Rom. 5 : 13.

² Isa. 30 : 21.

³ Matt. 23 : 23.

⁴ Lev. 5 : 17.

⁵ Jer. 23 : 6.

⁶ Isa. 33 : 22. James 4 : 12. Psalms 103 : 19. Isa. 46 : 10.

⁷ Dan. 4 : 17. Deut. 4 : 35.

⁸ Dan. 4 : 35. Psalms 115 : 3. Psalms 135 : 6. ⁹ 1 John 3 : 4.

is, there is no transgression.’¹ Do you understand?”

“Yes.”

“*His will* is the *standard of right*:² consequently, *whatever* He wills, or ordains, or commands to be done, is right.³ For instance: If He should command me to strike a dagger to your heart, at this moment, as you stand there, there would be no sin in the act; because I should be obeying His command; and His will makes right. The sin would be in my *not* doing it, after He had commanded it. But His order to me, ‘Thou shalt *not* kill,’⁴ still stands in full force;⁵ and the sin, now, would consist in my disobeying that order.

“Again. For reasons existing in the mind and will of the all-wise and just Jehovah, and, consequently, right reasons,⁶ God once suspended that law for the Jews, and ordered them to go up and destroy all the inhabitants of Canaan, and take possession of their country.⁷

¹ Rom. 4 : 15.

² Matt. 7 : 21. Rom. 12 : 2.

³ Rom. 9 : 14. Psalm 92 : 15. Deut. 32 : 4.

⁴ Luke 18 : 20.

⁵ Matt. 5 : 17, 18.

⁶ Rev. 15 : 3.

⁷ Deut. 7 : 1-5.

“It was no sin in the Jews to kill the wicked inhabitants ; because God had ordered them to do it. They would have sinned if they had *not* done it, and so disobeyed Him.

“It was right for God to give that order ; because His will makes right. It was right for Him to re-enact, or re-enforce, that law, for Jew and Gentile, as He did ; because He willed to do it, and His will is the standard of right. Is that true?”

“Yes : I think it is.”

“Well, then, if He is absolute God, the Supreme Lawgiver, Himself, and *whatever* He wills, or commands, or *ordains* beforehand to be done, is *right*, how *can* God *foreordain* sin ? It is an utter impossibility.

“How *could* He foreordain *you* to sin ? because *whatever* He ordains before, or foreordains you to do, is in accordance with His *will* that you *should* do, and, consequently, *not* sin. Do you understand ?”

“Yes,—that far,” he said, slowly. “But, then, the Bible speaks about God having fore-ordained some men to be damned.”

“Where do you find that passage, friend? I have never seen it.”

“I can't tell exactly where; but it seems to me that I have read about God having foreordained some men to be saved, and some to be damned.”

“Not to be damned. You never read such a sentence as that in the Bible; because it is not in it.

“If He had foreordained any one to be damned, He must have foreordained the sin for which they were punished; and we have seen that that is an impossibility.

“But God tells you just the opposite of that, in the Bible, friend. He tells you that hell was not prepared for *man* (like those mansions which Christ has gone before to prepare for those that love Him¹), but for the devil and his angels;² and He tells you repeatedly that He does not want you to persist in going there, that He is not willing that any one should perish.³ ‘As I live, saith the Lord God, I

¹ John 14 : 2.

² Matt. 25 : 41.

³ 2 Pet. 3 : 9. Ezck. 18 : 30-32.

have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his wicked way, and live. Turn ye, turn ye; for why will ye die?'¹

"But He *does* say in the Bible, that Christ was foreordained to be the Saviour of all who would believe on Him, 'before the foundation of the world;'² and that whosoever believeth on Him shall be saved;³ but 'he that believeth not shall be damned.'⁴

"Let me tell you what I have learned from the Bible, friend, and see if it is correct.

"When God created man, He made him sinless, and without the knowledge of evil,⁵ and forbade him to seek that knowledge.⁶ You know the story of his disobedience.⁷

"He made him an accountable being,⁸ with the power to choose the right and refuse the wrong; and he chose the wrong, and entailed upon you and me, and all who have ever lived since then, that knowledge of evil, and those desires after

¹ Ezek. 33 : 11. ² 1 Pet. 1 : 18-22. ³ John 3 : 14-19.

⁴ Mark 16 : 16. ⁵ Gen. 1 : 27. Eccl. 7 : 29.

⁶ Gen. 2 : 16, 17. ⁷ Gen. 3 : 6.

⁸ Rom. 14 : 12. 2 Cor. 5 : 10.

evil, which only the grace of God in our hearts has power to root out of our nature.¹

“He has given the power, by His grace and Spirit, to refuse the evil, and choose the good, to every one who will accept that help;² and He has opened up a way by which they might be saved from sin and from its punishment.³

“Now, God knew, from all eternity, who would accept that salvation——”⁴

“But,” he interrupted, “why didn’t He make *all* accept it? Or, else, *why* did He let sin come into the world at all?”

“Hear what God says about that Himself, friend,” I said, turning to Romans, ninth chapter and twentieth verse.

“‘Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?’ (or, ‘answerest again,’ or, ‘disputest with God,’ as the margin has it.) ‘Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay,’ &c. &c.’⁵

¹ Rom. 5 : 12–21. ² Ezek. 11 : 19, 20. Luke 11 : 13.

³ John 10 : 9. Matt. 7 : 7, 8.

⁴ Rom. 8 : 29. 2 Tim. 1 : 9. ⁵ Isa. 45 : 9. Job 33 : 13.

“God has the right to do as He pleases with His own creatures. He, seeing the end from the beginning, as our finite minds cannot see it, and taking counsel with His own wisdom, chose to do as He has done;¹ and, as we have seen, His will makes right.²

“We know, now, that we all deserve the punishment of sin, because we all have sinned.³

“It is only of God’s grace, that any of us are saved;⁴ and He has the right to bestow that grace as He pleases; and, so, He says⁵ that ‘He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth’ (as in the case of Pharaoh), by simply not giving the softening influence of the Spirit to those who neither seek it, nor wish for it.⁶

“But, as I was going to say, God foreknew all things, from eternity to the end of time⁷ (because, if there was any time in which He did not know all things, then He was not, at that time, perfect and absolute God).

¹ Isa. 46 : 9, 10.

² Psalm 33 : 4.

³ Rom. 3 : 23.

⁴ Eph. 2 : 8.

⁵ Rom. 9 : 18.

⁶ Rom. 1 : 28.

⁷ Acts 15 : 18. Isa. 46 : 10.

“ He foreknew just what has happened; and, so, out of His love and mercy, He foreordained a Saviour, for all who would accept of Him.

“ That Saviour is the gift of His grace.¹ He gives all² the power to accept that Saviour, if they wish it, and seek it, by His Spirit; but He will not force any into heaven against their will. Heaven would not be *heaven*, if we did not want to go into it.

“ A great many, when they get to thinking about these things, put the *foreordaining*, or ‘predestinating’ to be saved, *first*, and so get into trouble.

“ Let us see the order in which God places it,” I said, turning to Romans, eighth chapter, and reading the twenty-ninth and thirtieth verses.

“ For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren.

“ Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them

¹ John 4 : 10. Rom. 6 : 23. Rom. 5 : 15.

² John 7 : 37. Rev. 22 : 17.

He also called ; and whom He called, them He also justified ; and whom He justified, them He also glorified.'

" You see that when He speaks about those whom He foreknew would choose to be saved, He says,—

" 'For whom He did *foreknow*' (He puts His *foreknowledge* first, observe), those persons (you and me, if we choose) 'He also did *predestinate*,' or 'resolved' them, 'to be conformed to the image of His Son,' and, so, saved ;¹ and fore-ordained that His Son, God, by His own consent, should die for them, and so save them.²

" That was His purpose, existing in His own mind, from all eternity, and not affecting any one until they come into the world.

" And then, when men come into the world, God *calls* them, by His Word and Spirit³ (as He calls all ; as He has called you, many times) ; and those who obey that call, 'them He also *justifies* ;'⁴ i.e. He applies, by His Spirit, that salvation, purchased by Christ, to their souls ;

¹ 2 Cor. 3 : 18. Eph. 1 : 4-7.

² 1 Pet. 1 : 19, 20.

³ John 15 : 22. Acts 17 : 30.

⁴ 1 Cor. 6 : 11.

and, because Christ has paid the debt of all who would accept of Him, they can with justice be set free from the penalty of their sins.¹ And those whom He justifies, them He also *glorifies*, with His own glory,² in heaven.

“And, so, God’s ‘Elect,’³ as they are sometimes called, seek God’s Spirit (they can have that always, if they ask it⁴), to enable them to accept that Saviour, and to obey His laws, and to turn from evil, and to seek good, and so be prepared for the society of heaven while they are down here; and He helps them, by His Spirit, to endure to the end;⁵ and so, as it is expressed, they ‘work out their own salvation;’ while, all the time, God gives them Christ, and ‘works in them,’ by His Spirit, ‘both to will and to do of His own good pleasure;’⁶ for it is His own *good pleasure*, or will, that they *should* be saved.⁷ Is that plain?”

“Yes: I think it *is*.”

“Search the Bible for yourself,⁸ friend; and

¹ Acts 13 : 38, 39. ² Rom. 8 : 17. ³ 1 Pet. 1 : 2.

⁴ Luke 11 : 13. ⁵ Matt. 24 : 13. ⁶ Phil. 2 : 12, 13.

⁷ Ezek. 18 : 23. Ezek. 33 : 11. Luke 12 : 32.

⁸ John 5 : 39.

ask God to give you His Spirit, to help you to read it aright. Do not believe one word that I tell you, unless it agrees with God's word."

"I have read the Bible a good deal," he said, "but I am always coming across something that I don't understand; and I am so constituted that I can't *believe* any thing unless I *do* understand it."

I took a match from the match-safe, near me.

"Touch that: will you, friend?"

He did so.

"It is cold: not a bit of heat in it, is there?"

"No."

"And this counter: it is cold too, isn't it?"

"Yes."

I drew the match across the counter. "Now touch it."

No: he would not.

"Why?"

"Because it will burn me."

"This was colder than your finger, a moment ago, and so was this counter. Now, where did that light and heat come from?"

"It was in the match."

I could not feel it, nor see it."

"No; because it was latent, and the friction against the counter developed it."

"Where was it latent, or hidden, in the match? Suppose I break this unlighted one into the smallest atoms: can I find that heat? And the light; why can't I see it in this, now?"

"*Where* was it, and the heat, hidden? And *why*, and *how*, did the friction bring them out, so that I could feel and see them?"

"I *don't understand*; and (you say) 'I can't *believe* it unless I *do* understand it.'"

"I wish you would explain it to me. I don't mean, tell me about the 'carbon in the match uniting with the oxygen of the air,' &c. I don't want mere words, mere names, for some cause which somebody guessed at after watching the effect.

"I mean, make all the 'how's' and 'why's' perfectly plain to me."

"No; I cannot. Nobody in the world can do that."

"Well, then, if you cannot perfectly understand so apparently simple and trifling a thing

as the lighting of a match, how *can* you *understand* God?

"Can you tell me how I do this?" I said, picking up a book, and turning it around in my hand.

"Well, you willed to do it; and your will sent out a nervous fluid along the muscles, and caused them to contract, and relax, so that you could move your hand."

"What do you mean by my 'will'? Where is it? And what is it like? And this 'nervous fluid,'—no one has ever seen it. I do not understand. I wish you would explain."

"No. No one can explain that."

"Can you tell me how I see you now? And why I could not see you if I were dead? I don't mean, tell me about 'rays of light;' because they have no effect on the eyes of the blind, or the dead.

"I don't mean, tell me about the 'optic nerve,' and the 'retina;' because they are only the instruments of vision, and might be there and I still not see you; but *behind them*,—*how* is your image pictured on my brain?"

"I don't know."

"Can you tell me how I can take thoughts out of my mind, now, and put them into yours?"

"Or how I can glance my eye along this page, and take into my mind the same thoughts that were in the mind of a man (Baxter) who has been dead nearly two hundred years? Do you believe that I can do so?"

"Yes."

"Do you understand it?"

"No."

"How do you think, at all? Do you understand how you do so?"

"No; I don't."

"Do you believe that you do think?"

"Yes. I know it."

"For your dinner, to-day, you ate different kinds of food, which will be converted into blood.

"Can you tell me how, from that same blood, will be formed the bones, muscles, brain, hair, and nails, of your body? substances so unlike, and yet formed from the same thing?"

"I don't mean, to tell me all those long

names (mere words) that physiologists give us ; but just *how* that change takes place,—and *why*.”

“No ; I can’t. No one in the world can do that.”

“Well, then, if you cannot *understand yourself*, how *can you understand your Creator* ?

“Can you tell me how the corn and the grass grow ? Or, how the same grass turns to hair on the horse, and feathers on the birds ? Or, why the sun’s rays warm me, and the north wind makes me cold ? Tell me the how, and why. I don’t understand, and (you say) ‘I can’t believe it unless I do understand it.’”

“No one in the world can perfectly understand, or explain, such things.”

“Well, then, if you cannot perfectly understand even the simplest operations of nature, going on around you, how *can you understand nature’s God* ?

“You have studied algebra, friend ?” I asked, after a few moments’ silence, as he still did not answer.

“Oh, yes.”

“I wish that you would watch me, while I work out a little problem on this slip of paper, and see if I reason correctly.

“We will take any two unknown quantities, —say x and a : then

“Let $x = a$.

“Then, by multiplying by x , x^2 will be equal to ax . By subtracting a^2 , $x^2 - a^2 = ax - a^2$. By dividing by $(x - a)$, $x + a = a$. By collecting, and substituting the value of x , we have $2 a = a$ And, by dividing by a , $2 = 1$.

“Or, Let $x^2 = a$.
 Then $x^2 = ax$,
 And $x^2 - a^2 = ax - a^2$,
 And $x + a = a$,
 And $2 a = a$,
 And $2 = 1$.*

“Have I reasoned correctly?”

“Yes, I think so; but——”

“But 2 does *not* equal 1. You know that. And yet it is said that ‘figures cannot lie.’ Where is the difficulty?”

* Haines.

He could not tell.

“If that proverb be true, then it must be because we have introduced an infinite factor into the problem, and our human reason, being incapable of judging of infinity, is led to an absurd and untrue conclusion.

“Now, if in any thing so material as mathematics, the boasted science of cavillers and infidels and Unitarians (many of the last-named, you know, reject the doctrine of the Trinity, on the ground that ‘for one to be three, and three one, is a mathematical absurdity;’ and yet we have just proved, by mathematical rules, that two equals one),—if even in this, when we attempt to comprehend and reason on the infinite, we are immediately led to an absurd and untrue conclusion, how much more are we liable to err when we take infinity as a factor in mind!

“How much less are we capable of reasoning on, and understanding, the Infinite God! And how unwise in us to cavil at, or reject, *any truth* revealed by that Infinite Mind, on the plea that we do not *understand* it!

“And that is just what you are trying to do, friend. You are trying to comprehend the Incomprehensible.

“You are trying, with your finite mind, to reason out and understand the Infinite God; and you never can do that, if you should learn more and more about Him, and grow more and more capable of understanding Him, through a long eternity.

“Because, ‘If we could understand perfection, we were then perfection’s equal. And man would refuse to worship a God that he could fully comprehend.’

“Now, the very fact that you cannot understand *all* of the Bible is only another proof that a Superior Being wrote it.

“You could easily understand what I would write; because my mind is of no higher order than your own.

“You could study out the productions of the greatest human minds that have ever lived; because they belonged to no higher order of intelligence than yourself.

“But new circumstances will still bring new

power and beauty out of even the simplest parts of God's Word, even although you should study them until your gray hairs should sink into the grave.

"You do not need to understand all of the Bible. The parts that you are perplexing yourself about are only those in which God gives us some glimpses of *Himself*, His method of government, His purposes, His attributes; things with which we have nothing to do, except as they affect us personally; and whenever they do that, God makes our duty so plain 'that he may run that readeth it,'¹ and 'the way-faring men, though fools, shall not err therein.'²

"For instance: the question for you and me, to-day, friend, is not, '*How* did sin come into the world?' and '*Why* did God permit it?' but, '*Sin is* in the world,—that I see; I am a sinner, that I *know*. I am conscious that I sin, *voluntarily*, every day of my life, whether God fore-ordained me to do so or not. How am I, a sinner, to be saved?'

"And the answer is, 'Christ Jesus came into

¹ Hab. 2 : 2.

² Isa. 35 : 8.

the world to save sinners.’¹ ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.’² That is all that we *need* to know on this subject.

“You are not consistent.” (The caviller at God’s word never is.)

“You ate your dinner, to-day, without asking whether God had foreordained you to do so or not.

“You ate it, as a means of satisfying your hunger and nourishing your body; and you believed that it would do so, although you did not, and could not, *understand how* and *why* it does so, any more than you can understand *how* sin came into the world, and *why* God permitted it.

“The trouble and the ‘fog,’ friend, are not in the Bible, but in your own mind.

“God has given you some glimpses of your heart, by His Spirit, and troubled you by what you saw there. And so, in order to justify yourself, you are trying to throw the blame upon God.

¹ 1 Tim. 1 : 15.

² Acts 16 : 31.

“You say to yourself, ‘If He foreordained me to sin, then He ought not to hold me accountable for sinning.’

“‘He has so constituted me that I cannot believe any thing unless I understand it; then it is not right in Him to hold me accountable for not believing His own word.’

“You may really think yourself to be honest in your doubts; but that is only a deception of your own heart; and it springs from the simple fact that ‘the natural heart is enmity against God,’ and ‘is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be,’¹ until it is regenerated and renewed by His Spirit.

“That is what you *need first*. First be reconciled *to God*² through His Son, and then you will be reconciled to His *Word* and every thing you may find in it,³ and God will give you His Spirit to help you to understand *much* that you never can understand without it.⁴ ‘If any man will do His will,’ Christ promises, ‘he shall know of the doctrine.’⁵ Will you not

¹ Rom. 8 : 7.

² 2 Cor. 5 : 20.

³ Col. 1 : 20.

⁴ 2 Cor. 3 : 14-18.

⁵ John 7 : 17. John 8 : 43.

seek that Spirit to help you to do God's will by giving yourself up to the Saviour now? To believe on the Lord Jesus, and learn of Him¹ all that it is needful for you to know?"²

"Yes: with God's help, I will try."

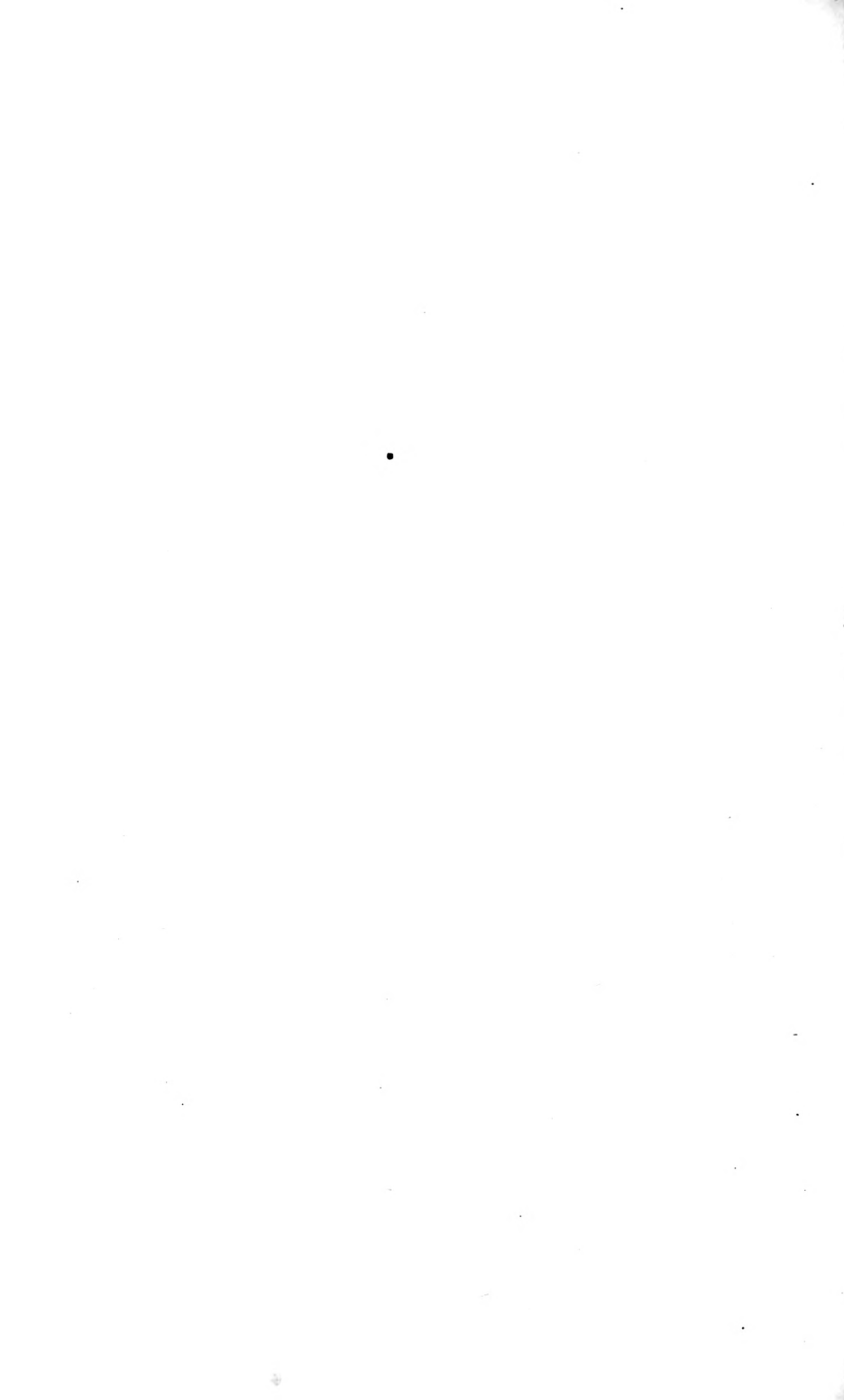
I selected and gave him some books suited to his cast of mind and present condition; and a few weeks afterwards he sent me back a large one, which I had only loaned to him, and enclosed a note in it, telling me that "he hoped he had found the Saviour; that he could now *trust* God for all that he could not understand, and that he hoped God would help him to grow in the knowledge of the truth, and in grace, and to be faithful even to the end."

His regiment was on duty in the city for months afterwards, and I saw him frequently in the rooms; and, from all that I could see or learn, I had no reason to doubt that he was indeed—what, before he left the city, he publicly professed to be—a Christian.

¹ Matt. 11 : 29.

² Psalm 32 : 8.

THE
STANDARD OF RIGHT.



THE STANDARD OF RIGHT.

“How do you reason out that *God's law* is the ‘standard’ of right?” asked one, after a conversation somewhat similar to that in the preceding sketch.

“Well, I will tell you the process. It is something like this:—

“‘Right’ and ‘wrong’ are only relative terms, such as ‘light’ and ‘darkness,’ ‘heat’ and ‘cold,’ &c. &c.

“Wrong is the absence of right, just as darkness is the absence of light, cold the absence of heat, &c.

“But, in order to make this apparent to us, we must have some standard by which to judge them. For illustration: White and black are not really ‘relative,’ because, although white is

the absence of all colour, black is the union of all; but we will take 'white' for an example, because it is most convenient now.

"We will take snow as the 'standard' of white. Now, that wall is not 'white,' but it is nearly so: something in the substance gives out yellow rays. I place this sheet of paper beside it. That is a little nearer to the 'standard' I have in my mind; but it sends out a few blue rays still. I place this piece of linen beside them both. You see the difference? Something has been applied to the linen to destroy every particle of colouring matter in it, and it only comes up to my 'standard,'—a pure or 'snowy' white.

"Now, I suppose that there is no night so dark that some particles of light are not abroad in it, no substance so cold that it does not contain some heat; but we will take the sun (the Bible-standard of earthly light) as the 'standard' of light.

"The farther it (the sun) recedes from the meridian, the earth, where we stand, receives its rays more obliquely, and fewer of them,

until the last one disappearing brings darkness, or night.

“We judge of heat and cold by the temperature of our bodies. As it is greater than that, we call it warm or hot; as it is less, we call it cold, &c.

“Now, I argue to myself,—as ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ are only relative terms, in order to make them apparent to us we must have some ‘standard’ by which to judge them; and that standard must be as perfect as possible, because it is the *test* by which the smallest minutiae of my thoughts and words and actions are to be judged.

“It must be an invariable standard, or it might change without my knowing it, and, so, the eternal interests of my soul be put in peril, without my knowledge.

“It must emanate from a Supreme Power, or else it might be affected by that which is greater than itself, and, so, varied.

“Now, moral standards are not apparent to our senses,—cannot be found in the physical world, like the material ones we have spoken of.

I must search for the standard of right in the regions of mind.

“I look into my own mind. I find that I judge of right and wrong there, by some standard which was not in my mind when I can first remember of thinking about these things. I can remember, when I was a child, of being taught what was right and what was wrong; and I find that my opinions still change, sometimes, by sufficient proofs that I have set up a false standard.

“Well, then, I say, the true standard does not originate in my mind,—was not born with me. It has to be instilled into my mind from some other source.

“I glance around among my neighbours. I find that if I take away that fixed standard, whatever it is, that, what one thinks is right, another thinks is wrong,—what one thinks is wrong, another thinks is right,—perhaps I should get as many different opinions of the same thing as the number of persons I apply to.

“Well, then, I say, that true standard is not in the opinions of men. You cannot say, ‘what-

ever a man believes to be right is right,' because he might shut his eyes, or place himself where the sun's rays could not reach him, and really believe that the sun was not shining; but it would still be shining all the same. His belief could not blot out a single ray.

"And, persons have firmly believed things, sometimes, which they afterwards plainly discovered had not one particle of truth in them.

"And, besides, as the standard of right is to be the test of my thoughts, no man living has the right or the power to know those thoughts, or regulate or judge them for me.

"Is it in their consciences? No; because I find that the conscience needs to be regulated by it, in order to be a proper judge.

"The Thugs of India go with their conscience when they make murder a business, by which they gain their daily bread; and they train up their children in it, as to a lawful trade.

"The heathen mother's conscience approves, when she murders her child.

"I have talked with those who had been

heathens, without a ray of gospel-light, until after they were old enough to remember how a heathen felt in regard to these things, and I found that they had no fixed standard of right. Their ideas of right and wrong had been very vague and dim indeed,—perhaps no more than faint lingerings of the moral sense implanted in man at his creation, or faint glimmerings of the truth handed down, by tradition, from age to age,—that imperfect law by which the heathen are to be judged.¹ They only had enough conscience to show, ‘like the existence of a regulator in a disordered watch,’ that there was some standard with which their lives should harmonize.

“And, besides, you know that men, even in Christian countries, after they have received a knowledge of right, can have a conscience so seared by sin, as scarcely to make itself felt when they do wrong.

“No. The conscience might have been a safe guide before the fall; but now it is a very perverted and variable conscience, indeed, and

¹ Rom. 2 : 12-18.

needs to be purified and regulated and cultivated by something outside of itself. I cannot find any sure standard of right there.

“Is it in earthly laws? I find that different nations have different laws about the same thing. And I find that the same nation changes its laws, sometimes. For instance,—stealing, and other minor offences, used to be punished with death, once, by nations that only punish them with imprisonment or fine or banishment now. And, besides, I find that nations themselves change. Many that once existed have passed away, and their laws with them. New ones (our own, for example) have sprung up, and new laws been formed. And, besides, I find that *all* Christian nations model their laws after some standard outside of themselves. So, I cannot find that fixed standard in them.

“Then, I cannot find it on earth.

“I glance around and above me. I see change and imperfection written on every thing I see. And, as that which is created cannot be perfect (except in a relative sense), neither

can it originate the perfect, or the changeable originate the unchangeable. I cannot rest here.

“And, so, I climb up, step by step, until I reach the Supreme, perfect, unchangeable God,—Himself the Truth,—the only one who has the right, as well as the power, to set up a ‘standard’ for the lives of all His creatures.

“If I stop short of that, I stop in a fog. Reason down from that, and I can take the ‘tangles’ out of many a ‘knotty point,’ the ‘ends’ of which I cannot find to unravel, if I search lower.

“If I go farther than that, I am lost in misty speculations, which, if carried out far enough, and persevered in long enough, will inevitably lead me into blind, blank atheism.

“So far, my reason approves. Then I have another test,—revelation; and so I take my theory, and measure it by the Bible. If it agrees with that measure, then I have two proofs, reason and revelation (and they are all the tests that I need), that my theory is correct.

“But I must go to work there, honestly. I must not ‘whittle down’ the Bible to suit my

theory, neither (if the Bible is too short) must I stretch it. But, as the Bible is the only sure 'measure' I can have, I must make my 'theory' to suit it.

"I throw away all sectarian teachings and 'philosophies' of men, and take the Bible only.

"I find there that God is spoken of in an absolute sense, as 'The Highest,' and the 'Most High,' about forty times. I cannot find there the least trace of any principle or power higher than He, to which He must conform. (For, to speak of an abstract 'principle,' unassociated with the idea of power, and yet which compels, is simply an absurdity.)

"I read there¹ that 'He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest thou?' 'Our God is in the heavens, He hath done whatsoever he pleased.'² 'Whatever He pleased, that did He in heaven and in earth, and in all deep places,' &c. &c.³

¹ Daniel 4 : 35.

² Psalm 115 : 3.

³ Psalm 135 : 6. Isa. 46 : 19. Deut. 4 : 39.

“I find that He alone is absolutely perfect;¹ that with Him alone² there is ‘no variableness, neither shadow of turning.’ ‘I am the Lord,’ He says:³ ‘I change not.’

“Now, this would be enough to make me stop my search; but I must not take a few verses and string them together to prove any thing that is inconsistent with the rest of the teachings of the Bible. You could prove almost any thing by that method. But,—

“I keep hold of my verses, and go prayerfully from Genesis to Revelation, and I find that they agree perfectly with the general tenor of all that God has revealed to us of Himself: and so I conclude that I have found what I was seeking,—the Truth,—the Supreme, unchangeable, perfect, uncontrolled Ruler, or ‘God.’ His will consistent with His nature, with all His attributes, and with itself in all its volitions. Not from necessity (God knows no necessity: ‘Must’ can never be applied to Him), but because He is perfect God; and whatever He is, is perfection. And in that will exists the true,

¹ Luke 18 : 19.² James 1 : 17.³ Mal. 3 : 6.

fixed 'standard' of right by which I am to be judged.

"When we reach that stand-point, we have a firm foothold. We were only floating in uncertainties before.

"Strike that 'key-note,' and all around you is harmony. Tune your faith by any other, and you have only uncertain sounds and discord.

"Now, God's will exists in His own mind, just as your will exists in your mind. I have no right to know what exists in your will at this moment, or at any moment, except as its purposes affect myself. Much less have I any right to know what exists in the will of God, except as its purposes concern me.

"I have no real right to know that, either, only that the idea of justice which I have formed from another of His attributes which He has revealed to me—His justice—leads me to expect that as He has given me the liberty of choice (the gift of His will), and help to choose aright, and so holds me an accountable being, He *will* make known to my mind what is His will concerning me."

“You say, ‘the idea of justice which I have formed from another of His attributes which He has revealed to me,—*i.e.* His justice.’ I do not understand.”

“Well, I mean simply this:—

“Whatever idea, or sense of justice, God gave man at his creation (because he was to live with others of his species who had equal rights with himself; and because he was to have dominion over the brute creation), he received directly from God, and it harmonized with, or was in the likeness of, God’s own justice. He had no other idea or sense of justice than what he thus received.

“What man’s idea of justice would have been now, had all communication from heaven ceased at the fall, we can only imagine. We can judge a little by the idea of it which exists among the heathen now, even with the glimmers from some source outside of themselves (perhaps), which may be in their minds still. It is like their sense of right and wrong,—very vague and dim indeed, without any fixed standard by which to regulate their lives.

“And you know, too, that even nominally Christian countries need to protect the rights of individuals by stringent laws; and even the severe penalties affixed to some of those laws are not strong enough to prevent injustice from man to man; while his injustice to the lower animals is demonstrated before our eyes every day.

“I might go through nearly the same process of reasoning we have been using, to show that we have received our ideas of justice only from what God has revealed to us of Himself, and what we have received from Him; and that the more our lives are in harmony with His will, — ‘All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them,’¹ — the nearer we approach the only true standard of justice.

“We see enough to convince us that men now naturally love themselves best, and would like to appropriate to themselves all that they think is good. Only from God could come the standard, ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.’²

¹ Matt. 7 : 12. Luke 6 : 31.

² Matt. 22 : 39. Mark 12 : 31. Luke 10 : 27.

“So, we might go through nearly the same process, to show that¹ ‘there is none good but One, that is God;’ and that all our true ideas of goodness have their source in Him; to show that we have no correct idea of perfection, except what God has revealed to us of Himself; and that the nearer our lives are in harmony with His will, in harmony with God, so to speak,—the nearer we approach to the standard made manifest to us in the earthly life of God in Christ,—the nearer we approach to being ‘perfect, even as our Father which is in heaven is perfect.’²

“So, we can find the ‘standard of truth’ only in God. And so we can trace our true ideas, or sense of all that is good, and true, and perfect, up to the same great Source and Author.³ Is that plain?”

“Yes.”

“Is it true?”

“I think so.”

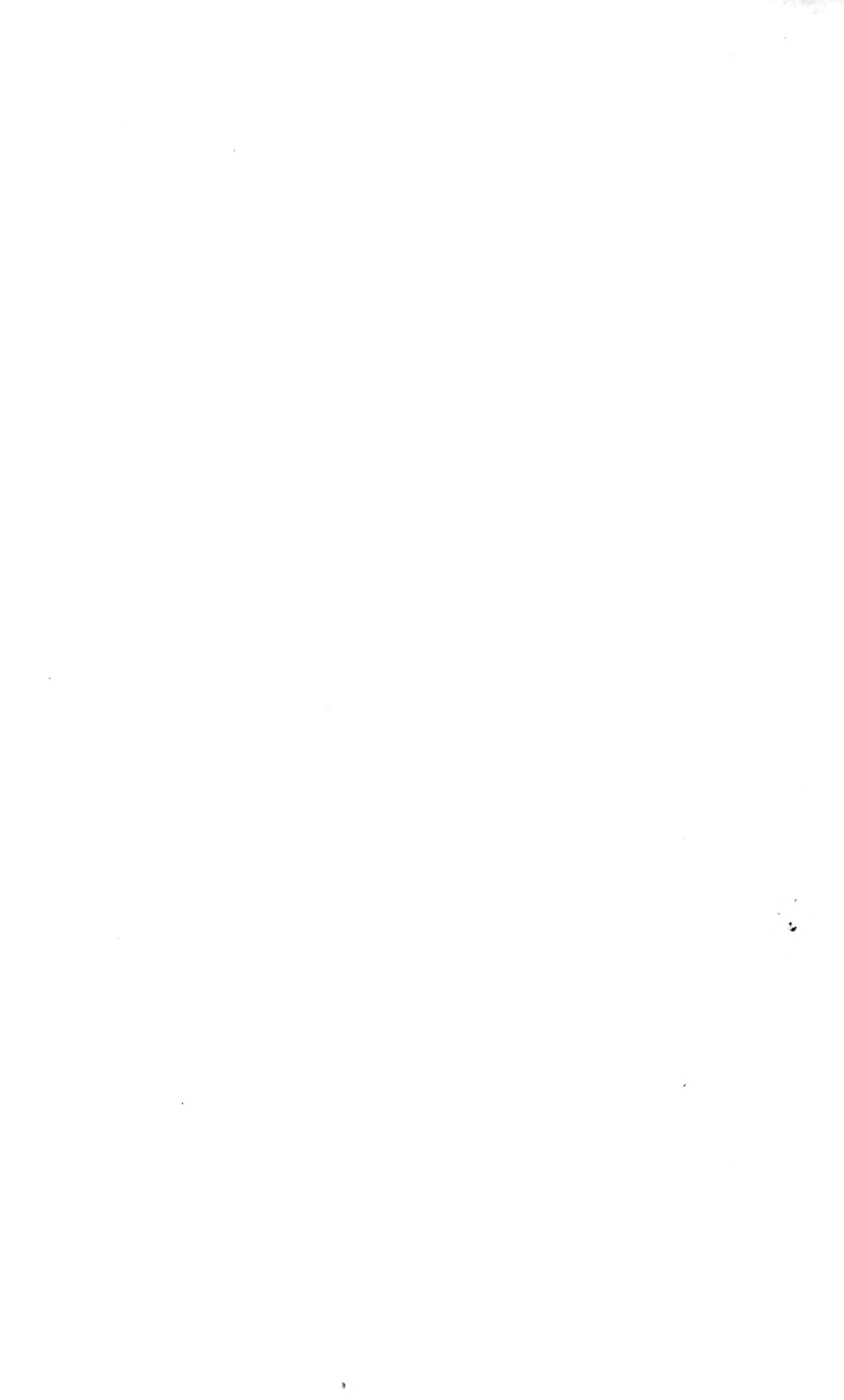
¹ Matt. 19 : 17.

² Matt. 5 : 48.

³ John 3 : 27. 1 Cor. 4 : 7. James 1 : 17.

“Now, there must be some medium of communication between mind and mind.

“You use words to convey your will to me: so the *law* of God, as it is now revealed to us in the Bible, is God’s will put into words,—such words as will best convey that will to our finite minds; and in that will, as thus expressed to us, we have our only true ‘Standard of Right.’”



THE
CAVILLER AT PRAYER.



THE CAVILLER AT PRAYER.

“It would do no good for me to pray,” said a caviller at God’s word, one day, when I was urging him to pray. “God would not listen to me; because the Bible says that ‘the prayer of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord.’”

“Where does the Bible say that, friend? I have never seen it.”

“Well, I can’t tell just the chapter and verse; but I am almost certain that I have read it somewhere.”

“It says in the Bible¹ that the ‘sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord’ (or an hypocrisy) when he offers sacrifice for sin, and, at the same time, does not intend to give up his sins. And it says, in another place, that²

¹ Prov. 15 : 8.

² Prov. 28 : 9.

‘he that turneth away from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination,’—or, hateful to God,—or, sin.

“For instance: you wish to go into a man’s house, by night, and rob him; and you pray to God to make him sleep soundly, and so give you the opportunity to do so. Such a prayer would be an ‘abomination,’ because you turn away from the law, ‘Thou shalt not steal.’ God says,¹ ‘Ye ask, and ye receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts;’ because² ‘If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.’

“Or you pray, ‘Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors,’ and at the same time you cherish an unforgiving or revengeful spirit towards any one who has wronged you. Such a prayer would be asking God *not* to forgive you; because He says,³ ‘If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.’

“So, the *swearer* prays, when he swears,—whether he means it, or not; but you know

¹ James 4 : 3.

² Psalm 66 : 18.

³ Matt. 9 : 15.

what dreadful things, what ‘abominations,’ he asks of God, at the same time that he treats the great and holy God with disrespect, and turns away from the law,¹ ‘Thou shalt not take the name of thy Lord thy God in vain.’

“Those are all the passages that I can remember now, where it says any thing like that; and you have picked them out from among a great many passages, where God *commands sinners* to pray to Him; and from among a great many promises that, if they ask aright, their prayers shall be heard and answered; and from among a great many instances where He *shows* you that He has heard and answered the prayers of sinners; because, if you look closely into your own heart, you will find that you really do not want to pray, at all. God has touched your heart by His Spirit, and made you feel that you *need* to pray to Him, and ought to do it; and when you remember how you have been treating Him all these years, you shrink from speaking to Him; you do not want to bring yourself into His presence.

¹ Ex. 20 : 7.

“And, besides, somebody says, ‘Praying’ (real prayer) ‘will make a man leave off sinning, or sinning will make a man leave off praying;’ and you do not want to give up your sins, and yet the thought of them troubles you, sometimes; and so you try to excuse yourself for clinging to them, by throwing the blame on God’s word. You say, ‘The fault is not with me, but with God; because He has said that if I should pray to Him, He would not listen to me.’ But you cannot hold up such excuses, to cover your sins from His sight; neither can you plead them at the bar of His justice, when you know that He has said to you, as to all, when they pray for things agreeable to His will,¹ ‘Ask, and it shall be given you. Seek, and ye shall find. Knock, and it shall be opened unto you.’”

“But,” said another caviler at God, “if God is unchangeable, what is the use of prayer?”

“*God* does not change, but *our impressions* and *experiences of Him* do.”

¹ Luke 11 : 9. Matt. 7 : 7.

“For illustration: You remember that, once, it was considered a certainty that the earth was immovable in space, and that the sun, moon, and stars revolved around it. Men thought that they had the evidences of their senses for this; and the first one who advanced a different theory was threatened with death.

“But it was afterwards proved, with as much certainty as such things can be proved, that the sun is immovable in the heavens (or nearly so, as far as this earth is concerned), and that the cause of its apparent motion is our own change of position in regard to it. It is the earth that moves, instead of the sun.

“We see something like this, when we are travelling rapidly, and stationary objects appear to our vision to be moving swiftly past us, even while we know that they have not moved at all, only, we have changed our position in regard to them; or, as when distant objects appear to grow larger as we approach them; or, as when travelling through a hilly country the landscape appears to us to enlarge or contract, or new views appear to be momentarily spreading them-

selves out before our eyes; while all the time they remain as before we came,—would have been the same had we never seen them at all. The cause of their apparent change and motion was in *us*,—not in them.

“So, when God appears to our minds to have been moved by our prayers, it is, in reality, we ourselves who have moved our positions towards God. We have received new impressions of Him, new views of Him, and new accessions to our experience of Him, only. The gifts, or good, we asked of Him, were in His power, and His purpose towards us, from all eternity; only, until we felt the need of them, until we prayed, we were not in the position towards God which we need to take before His gifts can reach us as blessings.

“For illustration: You sit shivering under a thick shade, while the sun is shining brightly all around it. A friend comes to you, and says, ‘The sun’s rays will warm you, if you choose.’

“‘But,’ you answer, ‘I have been taught that the sun is fixed in the heavens. It is no

use trying to have it move so that its rays can reach me here.'

"'But,' your friend says, 'you are to come out from under the shade, and stand where the sun's rays will fall upon you.'

"'But,' you still object, 'I am so benumbed with the cold that I cannot move myself.'

"And the answer is, 'I am sent by one who loves you, and is not willing that you should perish, to help you. I can do it; and I will do it, if you choose.'

"Then, if you really feel your need of heat, and really desire it, you move out, with his help, into the sunshine, and receive warmth and strength.

"Now, that sun was shining all the time, although you could not feel it, as you needed, until you changed your position in regard to it.

"So, God's storehouse is always full of such blessings as you need, and God's Spirit is always waiting to help you to place yourself where they will fall upon your head and heart; but you are to come out, with the help of the Holy Spirit, from under the shadow of your sins, or your unbelief, or whatever it is that is between

you and the blessing; and the promise is, 'It shall be given you.'

"And it is God's will that you should stand in that position towards Him, all the time, 'continuing instant in prayer.'¹ 'Pray without ceasing,' He says.²

"Now, we know that that does not mean that we should keep our bodies bowed in the attitude of prayer, all the time; because He has given us a great many other duties, equally binding, to perform, which would forbid that (and His orders never conflict); but we should always possess the *spirit* of prayer,—a constant looking up to God as the 'author and giver of every good and perfect gift.' As our wants come (and they come every moment), looking up to Him for their supply. As mercies and blessings reach us (and they reach us every moment), lifting up our hearts in gratitude to Him who sent them; and, so, keep moving out, with His Spirit's help, into the sunshine of His presence, continually. We should put ourselves, by the help of His Holy Spirit, into the position where

¹ Rom. 12 : 12.

² 1 Thess. 5 : 17.

His choicest gifts can reach us, as blessings; and the promise is, 'You shall receive them.' That is the only condition on which we can claim the promise.

"For example: God, after telling His people Israel what rich blessings, both spiritual and temporal, He had in store for them, said,¹ 'I will yet for this be inquired of' (or asked) 'by the house of Israel, to do it for them.'

"The gifts were in His power, and His purposes towards them, then; but until they drew near to God, and *sought* His blessing, they should not receive them.

"Again: the father of the prodigal son, spoken of in the Bible,² was unchangeably loving and pitiful; the son was changeable and fickle.

"While the son was starving in a 'far country,' that father's house was filled with plenty; but its abundance could do the son no good, so long as he deliberately turned away from it, and refused to partake of it, and preferred his sins. As soon as he sought his father's face, how joyfully the repentant prodigal was received,

¹ Ezek. 36 : 37.

² Luke 15 : 11-32.

and clothed, and fed, by the *same love* that would have received and blessed him in any hour of his wanderings, if he had desired it and sought it!

“So, God is our *unchangeably loving Father*. We are His ‘prodigal sons,’ as long as we turn away from that love, and wander in sin, and refuse His blessings. As soon as we return to Him, we are welcomed and blessed by the *same love* which was ready to welcome us at any previous moment; and the rich gifts of His love are given to us for our asking.

“We, only, change, when we receive good gifts from God in answer to our prayers. God’s unchanging promise to us, always, is, ‘Whatsoever ye ask in my name, that will I do.’ ‘If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.’”¹

In the quick-changing, kaleidoscopic life of the wards at this period, I only had opportunity for the one conversation with either of these cavillers at prayer, before they were discharged, and passed to their homes, out of the reach of my knowledge.

¹ John 14 : 13, 14.

THE SUBSTITUTE.

THE SUBSTITUTE.

WHILE talking with a sick soldier, in the hospital at the transfer depot, one day, I noticed two strangers come into the ward. One of them lay down on a cot, and presently I went over to him. He had belonged to the —— regiment, he told me. His regiment had been discharged while he was too sick to travel, and he and his comrade had come there, now, on their way home.

“I have been wanting so much to see you once more,” he said, raising himself up in bed.

“Why, did you ever see me before? Where?”

“In the hospital at ——: don’t you remember? I have been thinking so much about what you said, that day; and I wanted to see you again, to tell you.”

“What did I say, friend? I know that it was only on the *one subject*; but I have forgotten the conversation.”

“You remember, I said something about ‘getting ready to die;’ and you said that you did not believe in ‘getting ready to die;’ that was not the *right motive*. I ought to ‘get ready to *live*.’ That I owed my life, my talents, my influence, to God, and it was *not right* to keep them back from Him, or use them against Him. That I ought to ‘present my body a *living sacrifice* to God,’ which was my ‘reasonable service,’ instead of turning to Him at the last moment only, so that I could get into heaven.”

“And did you do as I said, friend?”

“Yes: I think I did,” he said, earnestly.

“Oh, I am so glad! And your *soul*, friend? What did you do with it? You do not think that your present obedience will free it from past guilt?”

“No: I took it to Jesus, to have Him apply the ‘blood of cleansing.’”

“And you think that He did so? And that you are a Christian?”

“I hope so.”

We glanced at some of the evidences we can have of our acceptance with God, through His Son,—love to God, to His people, to His word, hatred of sin, desires after holiness. He had many of the “family marks,” if his heart did not deceive him; and once more he expressed his strong desire, in life or in death, to be “only the Lord’s.”

Presently his comrade came up, and I began giving him some of my little tracts.

“You gave me that before,” he said, handing me back “The Substitute.”

“Where did I give it to you?”

“In the hospital at —, when I was sick: don’t you remember? I have all the little books you gave me, in my knapsack,—taking them home to the children.”

“You have a ‘Substitute,’ have you, friend?” I said, as I put the tract back into my satchel.

“You know that persons who were ‘drafted’ for the army could be ‘exempted,’ or freed from obligation, by their providing a ‘substitute’ to take their place in the dangers of the march,

and the camp, and the battle-field, and perhaps of death.

“Now, there is a *last grand draft* coming, from which no one will be ‘exempted;’ which you, and I, and all the world, must meet;¹ but against that day there is a ‘substitute’² provided, who has *already* taken our place, even to the death; and He is offered ‘without money, and without price,’³ to every one who will accept of Him; and, in that day, every name will be ‘drawn,’ but that of those who have received Him, given themselves to Him, and had *His* name ‘substituted’ for *theirs*.⁴ ‘Deliver’ them ‘from going down to the pit,’ says God;⁵ ‘for I have found a ransom.’

“Have you accepted Him as *your* ‘substitute’ yet, do you think, friend?”

“I hope so,” he said, earnestly. “I have never made a profession of religion, but——”

“You think that you *possess* it?”

“Yes: I do hope so.”

¹ Eccl. 12 : 14. Rom. 14 : 12.

² Mark 10 : 45. Eph. 1 : 7.

³ Isa. 55.

⁴ Rev. 20 : 12-15.

⁵ Job 33 : 24.

Again we glanced at some of the signs of the "new birth."

"You have become a Christian, then, you trust, since you came into the army?"

"Yes; since I saw you that time."

"Oh, I am so glad!—so glad!" And then we had a little talk about the future in their new life, if God should give them a future on earth.

The supper "call" sounded, while we were talking, and with an earnest "God bless you," as they shook my hand at parting, they went down-stairs,—out of my sight, most probably, until they "return" again, I trust, among the "ransomed of the Lord."¹

¹ Isa. 35 : 10.

CONTRASTED DEATH-BEDS.

18*

CONTRASTED DEATH-BEDS.

IF I knew nothing at all about the religion of Christ further than what I have seen of its influence in the wards of hospitals, I should choose to be a Christian for the comfort that it gives when all other help is powerless, and for the peace it gives in death. Sometimes the contrast between those who possessed it and those who did not, was so strongly presented in the same ward, that even the most hardened were forced to acknowledge its power. One such contrast, out of very many, comes before me vividly at this moment.

Late one night, one of the nurses in Ward —— came for me to pray with a new-comer, who was dying in such terrible mental agony that even they, accustomed as they were to death-scenes, were frightened.

He was an emaciated, middle-aged man, with such a despairing, horror-stricken face as I do not care to see again. I have forgotten the words that he uttered; but I can still see plainly the startled outlook from his sunken eyes as he told me "how wicked he had been, and that his soul was lost."

I held up before him the pitying Saviour who pardoned the thief upon the cross. For a moment he would seem to be trying to look to him; then he would shrink back, and his teeth would chatter and his whole frame tremble as if in an ague-fit, as he told me "it was too late! The flames of hell are closing around me already. Don't you see them?"—starting up, and trying to fight them back with his hands. "They are coming nearer and nearer. I shall soon be in them."

Then he would sink back, and his reason, which the approach of the king of terrors had frightened from its seat, would return for a few moments.

For more than an hour I sat beside him. He would not let me leave him sooner. A few hours later, and his cot was empty.

The dimly-lighted ward, the pale faces from the cots around that helped me watch that dying man, are photographed upon my memory still.

On the opposite side of the ward, a few beds higher up, a young boy lay for months. He came to us very ill, and at one time we thought he could only live a few days. What a feeling of *rest* would come over me, as I turned from the careless or sin-sick hearts around him to meet the pure, calm face that always greeted me with such a smile of peace! How I enjoyed sitting beside his cot, hearing him talk of Jesus! "That precious Jesus! I shall *soon* see Him, soon be where He is. *I can hardly wait.*" And his eye would light up with the glad anticipation of a child returning home after a long absence, as he peers out into the darkness and catches the light from the open door in the distance, and tries to picture the dear familiar faces that watch and wait for him. Then he would take his little, well-worn Testament, and turn here and there to the stray glimpses of the "golden city," which our Father has let down to us

through the rifts of the future, and he would help me to put them together, and try to picture what kind of a place it was,—try to take from this world all we are told is *not* there, and *add* to it all we are told *is* in heaven. But, after trying to imagine what a pleasant place even earth would be then, we felt that we could only see “as through a glass darkly” the things which God has prepared for them that love him. “But *I shall soon see, soon know,*” he would repeat, so joyfully that I could scarcely keep back a feeling of envy that he should be so near home, while I must wait and work.

But he, too, must come back a little distance to speak some more words for Jesus to those around him.

“You are so much better,” I said, one day, “perhaps our Father has some work for you to do in this world yet.”

“Yes, I am better; and—do you know?—*I a’n’t glad,*” he said, in such an earnest, child-like way, and with such a look of disappointment, that it touched me deeply. “I was so near home I didn’t want to come back again.”

He tried to receive this life as from the hands of one who loved him; but I am afraid he was only too glad to feel it slipping away from him again, —scarcely fast enough to please him, though. I had to talk to him more than once about patient waiting.

“What time is it?” he asked the warden, one morning.

“Eight o’clock.”

“I think I will be on my way home by one o’clock.” (He always called heaven “home.”) About that hour I slipped into his ward. “I don’t think it is right,” he whispered, with a wronged look. “I was almost gone, and they gave me stimulants and brought me back, and I didn’t want to come.” A little more waiting and longing, and he went up to that “precious Jesus” whose name was the last I heard him utter.

Two brothers, a citizen and a soldier, were with him nearly from the first. He was the youngest and the pet. Earth had much to attract him, but after that first near outlook into eternity, he scarcely gave a downward

glance. All interest appeared to be centred in "Jesus" and "heaven."

Another picture of shade, and light. "No. 6" was a middle-aged man, who had lain in a field-hospital in the poisonous swamps of the Yazoo River, until he was wasted to a skeleton, —the skin of his face clinging to the bones, dry and withered, like parchment.

He revived a little in the first few days after he came to us; and when I talked to him about his soul, he told me that he had been a very wicked man all his life.

"But," he said, "I have been thinking about these things a good deal lately; and I have made up my mind that, if God spares me to get home, I am going to turn a new leaf. I intend to buy a little farm and settle down, and try to live a Christian for the rest of my days."

Again and again we held up before him a crucified Redeemer, and urged him to accept of that dear Saviour *now*; told him how *unwise* it was to delay any longer; and he would tell me,—

"Yes, I know; but I am so weak now. You

see, I have read enough about my own system, to know that perfect rest is the best medicine I can have; and I want to keep my mind perfectly free from care, until I get a little stronger; and then I will attend to my soul."

One day, when I came up to his cot, he was lying asleep; but I could see, by the look on his face, that the end was very near; and, as I stood quietly beside him for a moment, he opened his eyes.

Such a startled, frightened look as was in them!

"I'm afraid—I'm dying," he gasped. "I'm afraid—I will have—to go—" And his eyes turned back in their sockets, even as he spoke.

I bent close to his ear.

"*Pray, friend,—pray.* Say, 'God be merciful to me, a sinner, and pardon my sins, for Christ's sake. Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.'"

He made a convulsive effort:—

"God-be-mer——" It was too late,—*too late!* The lower jaw fell, showing the inside of his mouth to his throat; and, as I stood there, I saw his tongue moving, trying to articulate

the words—until its muscles (about the last to die) were palsied to the roots.

I thought that he was gone; but in a moment a convulsion passed over his face. It was more than a nervous twitching of the relaxing muscles. I have often seen that on a dying face; but this had something of that passing *soul* in it. Such horror and *shrinking*, as if, even before that soul left this world, it had caught a glimpse of what was before it in the next.

I never recall such a face as that without a thrill of pain, even to this day,—without bringing back something of the feeling with which I stood beside such cots, and thought, “Oh, if those who are waiting for a ‘more convenient season’ to attend to their souls’ salvation, could only look on this and be warned!”

Standing in Ward ——, some months later, talking to “No. 12,” “No. 13” heard my voice (he was lying with his back towards me), and turned his face around with a smile of welcome. But what a change had come over that fair, boyish face in one short week!

It startled me. The hectic flush had disappeared, leaving it utterly bloodless, lips and all. All the life seemed to be centred in the large dark eyes. I saw that he was dying, although, as is very often the case in pulmonary diseases, his voice and mind were clear and strong as in health.

“I want you to write home when I am gone,” he said, after a little talk about Jesus. “Tell them how happy I died. Tell father I am so sorry I ran away” (he had become a Christian since he came into the army); “but, oh, I am so happy now. Tell Charlie and Emma to be good, and meet me in heaven. Tell mother”—he stopped at that dear name—“You will be waiting for her?” “Yes.” The words came slowly now. “I am going—to Jesus—blessed Jesus!”

I was kneeling beside his cot, passing my hand lightly over the boyish brow his mother had so often kissed. “Can you hear me yet, little brother?” I asked, when he was almost over the river. “Is Jesus still with you? Can you trust your soul into His hands?” The eyes

half opened, closed again, and my soldier-boy was with his Saviour.

“I will never forget that death-bed, as long as I live,” said “No. 12,” after he too, I trust, had become a Christian. Neither, I think, will it be forgotten by any of the awed group of convalescents who stood around my boy’s bed that day. From the most careless heart, I know, went up the prayer, “Let *me* die the death of the righteous, and let *my* last end be like *his*.”

A LIFE RESTORED.

A LIFE RESTORED.

"A GREAT deal better to-day, I see," I said, as I came up to "No. 25," a bright, intelligent-looking youth of about eighteen, who had been sent to us, with a great many other sick soldiers, from one of the lower hospitals a few days before.

"A great deal better," came back to me from lip and eye.

"And how glad and grateful we should be! You have been very ill: did you know it?"

"Yes. I thought I should die on the boat. I did not think I could live to get here."

"But now God is giving you your life back again, I trust. He gave it to you at first, you know. He very nearly took it from you in the past few weeks; and now that He is giving it

to you again a free gift, what are you going to do with it? Perhaps you have already consecrated it to His service, and are one of God's children?"

"No," he answered; "I am afraid not. My father and mother were Christians, and taught me to read the Bible and pray when I was a child; and I used to think a good deal about those things sometimes when I was at home. But after I went into the army,—you know we have so many other things to think of, and so many temptations to draw our minds away,—it seemed almost impossible to attend to these things there."

"Suppose you had been killed in battle, or had died on the boat: do you think God would have accepted such an excuse as that at the last day?"

"No: I know He would not." Then, after a minute's silence, he added, "I have been thinking a great deal lately, and reading my Bible every day that I was able; but there are so many things in it I do not understand."

"You do not need to understand every thing

in the Bible: what you need is to find the way of salvation in Christ," I said, seating myself on a vacant bed beside him. "What would you think of a farmer who refused to plant his corn because he could not understand how the same grain should send out two sprouts,—one of which, called the root, should shoot out long thread-like stems through the ground, fasten itself firmly, and suck up nourishment for the plant, and the other should creep up through the ground, and spread out into a strong stalk and leaves and ears? Suppose he should fold his arms and say, 'I won't plant a single grain until I can understand all about it.' Don't you think he would deserve to starve? God doesn't ask him to understand what He Himself only knows. The farmer is to plant the corn, keep the weeds from it, hoe round it, watch it, and pray for a blessing. That is his duty; God will take care of the rest.

"Do you understand *how* you did that?" I said, as he reached for the cup at the head of his bed, and took a drink. "Suppose you had said just now, 'I won't take a drop of water until I

can understand just how I am able to move my arm so that I can get it.' Don't you think you would deserve to be thirsty? And if you cannot understand yourself, or even tell me why the grass is green or the sky blue, do you think you can understand the great Maker of all, or all the reasons for His actions? The fact that we cannot understand some passages of the Bible, is only another proof that a superior Being wrote it. And you can never fully understand God, although you should go on learning more and more about Him for a long eternity; but the plan of salvation—all you need to know—is written so plainly that 'he may run that readeth it;' and 'the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.'"

He lay quietly a few minutes, as if in thought, and then said, "Another thing I cannot account for. I have seen men who professed to be Christians on Sunday, and yet they would swear and drink and cheat on week-days, just as bad as any one. I have lived beside such people and never saw them read their Bible, or pray, and they never spoke a word to me about my

soul. And, besides that, I have seen men whom I have heard pray in public and make loud professions when they were at home, and whom everybody thought to be really Christians; but after they had been in the army a while, they would swear and drink as bad as any one. Sometimes, when I saw them, it almost made me believe there was no such thing as religion."

"Did you ever see a counterfeit bank-note?" I asked.

"Yes,—often."

"That was always drawn on a *real* bank, and at a little distance looked like a good note: didn't it? And sometimes it looked so much like the true one, that you perhaps have been cheated yourself, and it passed for genuine until it came to some one who had a Detector. But, even if you had never seen a note on that bank before, seeing the counterfeit would make you think there was a true bank of that name and true notes in circulation somewhere: wouldn't it? Men do not counterfeit notes on a bank that does not exist: do they?"

"No," he replied.

“Just so counterfeit Christians only prove that there is true religion, and that there are true Christians somewhere. The men you refer to were counterfeits. Christ Himself says, ‘Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? Then will I profess unto them, I never knew you.’ I am afraid you are trying to *hide behind* some of those counterfeits, and think you are not so bad as they, because you do not profess to be a Christian. But you cannot hide behind them in the judgment; for the Judge Himself has told you, ‘Every one of us shall give account of himself unto God;’ and He will not listen to such excuses there.”

“Yes; that is all true,” he said; “but then I can’t feel that I have been such a *great* sinner as some say everybody is. My parents never allowed me to lie, or steal, or swear; and I have always attended church whenever I could. I cannot feel that I have been so very wicked.”

“Let us see what the Saviour says,” I said, taking up his Testament and turning to Matt. 22 : 37–40: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God

with all thy heart,' &c. Have you obeyed the first commandment, or the second either? Ask your own heart, and then read the rest of God's law, and measure your life by it, and see how far short it comes. Remember, too, that a sinful *thought* is as much a sin in God's sight as a sinful word or action. How many thoughts have passed through your mind to-day that you would be afraid or ashamed to have even this poor, sick soldier beside you know! and yet every thought of your life is written down in God's 'book of remembrance.' Don't you think that He and you too will read enough there on the last day to make you feel that a sentence of eternal death would be no more than just? You say you do not swear; but how many times have you stood quietly by and heard God's name, and even the name of that *dear Saviour* who died for you, taken in vain, and even smiled at it, for fear they would think you were His friend! You were ashamed to own that you even respected Him. And He has said, 'Whosoever is ashamed of me before men, of him will I also be ashamed before my Father

and His holy angels.' The Lord of glory took the form of man, and died as a sacrifice, to atone for your sins. He offers you His friendship and salvation,—blessings without which you are undone forever. To refuse to heed Him who calls to you so graciously from heaven, would seem to be the greatest sin a man can commit. But have not you neglected Him as much as if there were no heaven, no hell, no Saviour? And don't you think the only wonder is that the Judge still has patience with you, and spares you, and calls, 'Turn ye, turn ye; for *why* will ye die?' You have seen your companions fall beside you in battle; a few inches to the right or left, the ball would have taken you instead; you have seen your comrades carried out daily for burial,—one of them from the bed on which I am now sitting; and every time the 'stretcher' with its burden passed you, God warned you,—'Be thou also ready.' Did you not promise Him, before you went into battle, that you would do better if He would spare your life, and in a day or two forgot it and became as careless as ever? He sent sick-

ness to you, and when you thought you were dying you promised Him again. Have you fulfilled that promise? God has said, 'My Spirit shall not always strive with man.' This may be your *last* warning and invitation. If you remain cold and careless through all you have suffered, you will not be very apt to change if God should give you back health and home. Don't you think it would be better for you to die now, than only live in rebellion against God and go on adding to your guilt and punishment? 'To-day if you will hear his voice, harden not your heart.' There can be no more 'convenient season.' Let me pray you, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God. *Now*, '*now* is the accepted time:' there is no promise in the Bible for to-morrow. Think of these things; pray earnestly to God that He will give you His Holy Spirit to show you your heart as He sees it, and make you feel your need of a Saviour, and turn to Him and live."

He did not answer, but his face showed me he was thinking; and, fearing to weary him, I went up among the others.

“What says your heart to-day?” I said, as I came up to “No. 25” a day or two afterwards. “Does it look clean enough to pass into heaven without being washed in the Saviour’s blood?”

“No, indeed. I feel that I have done a great many wrong things; that I am a great sinner in God’s sight. I have prayed to Him, but my heart only seems to grow worse and worse. I could scarcely go to sleep last night, I was in such trouble. What must I do?”

“Let us see what the Bible says. ‘Repent ye, and believe the gospel.’ ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.’ This is what *you* must do: the promise is, ‘Thou shalt be saved;’ and God *always* keeps His promises. Do you truly *repent*? Remember, there is no true repenting of any thing unless we turn from it, and determine, with God’s help, that we will not do it again. Do you truly *believe*? You told me that you believed the Bible; but how do you believe? If you were drowning, and some person should put his hand within your reach and offer to

pull you out of the water and save you, you would be very apt to grasp it. You would not say you believed him, and yet refuse to take his hand: you would deserve to die if you did. Just so you must let your heart reach out to the Saviour, and grasp tight hold of His promises. He says, 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.' If your sins are heavy, take them to Jesus in prayer; tell Him all about them, and ask Him earnestly to take them from you. If you were pleading for your life, you would ask earnestly, not as if you did not care whether you received it or not: just so earnestly must you ask pardon of God, and then you must *give* yourself to the Saviour, both body and soul, and tell Him so. Be perfectly willing that He should do with you just what He pleases, even though He should want you to die to-morrow. Go to Him now,—this day, this hour. He says, 'Him that cometh unto me I will *in no wise* cast out.' How can you keep away from that *dear Redeemer* who so loved you as to give His life for you? He is willing not only to save

you from hell, but to give you heaven, where there is no more sorrow nor pain nor war,—the only Friend able to take care of you in death, which you must pass through sooner or later. Your nurses and physicians are powerless in that hour. You have seen that. Even if you should die at home, your dearest friends can only look on and weep. But this blessed Saviour has passed through the grave before you, and is now at the right hand of God, waiting to intercede for you, and take you for His own.”

I did not need *words* to tell me the next day, as I came to his bedside, that his heart was filled with the “peace that passeth understanding.” His *face* spoke that, even before he reached out his hands, his eyes brimful of happy tears, and said, “I do believe that Christ will pardon all my sins,—that He *has* pardoned them,” he added, slowly and humbly.

“Then there is joy in heaven at this moment,” I said, as I grasped his hand. “And now, once more, let me ask you, What are you

going to do with your earthly life if God gives it to you?"

"Spend it in His service, if He will help me."

"Yes: He has a great deal for you to do, I trust, whether you go back to your regiment or go home. Never forget to tell to sinners round what a dear Saviour you have found. Now that you have enlisted under the great Captain of your salvation, you must try to get everybody you can to enlist too. You have seen men try very hard to raise a company of soldiers to go to fight the battles of their country: so God wants you to be a 'recruiting sergeant' for Him. You will find your commission in Ezek. 3 : 23, and Rev. 22 : 17: 'Let him that heareth say, Come;' and try to have them love him too."

It was a great comfort for many days after, as I passed up and down the ward, to see him lying quietly reading his Bible, or with his eyes closed and peace on his face, or to be greeted with a bright smile and a few happy words. "*I do so want to begin* to be a recruit-

ing sergeant for the Lord's army," he said one day; "but I try to be patient and wait till He is ready."

Whether I shall meet him again on earth, our Father only knows; but if ever I am permitted to enter heaven, I trust to find "No. 25" among the redeemed ones there.

HINDRANCES REMOVED.

HINDRANCES REMOVED.

GOING into one of the "wounded" wards in the hospital at St. Louis a few days after it had been newly filled with patients from the Lower Mississippi, I passed from one to another of the brave men lying there so patiently, giving tracts and a few words to each, until I came to cot No. 20. Its occupant, a bright, intelligent-looking young man, looked up with a pleasant smile as I stood beside him. He had been wounded at Vicksburg, he told me, had suffered a great deal, but was better, and hoped to recover now. His eye kindled as he told me of those stormy days, and his own narrow escapes from death.

"Our heavenly Father must have loved you a great deal when He preserved your life

through so many dangers," I said. "A great many poor fellows were killed when you were wounded: were there not?"

"Yes: more than half our regiment was cut down."

"How would it have been with you, friend, had you been killed then? Were you ready?"

"I am afraid not."

"Then how kind our heavenly Father was, to let you come up here and give you a little quiet time to prepare for eternity! A more 'convenient season' you cannot have, if you should live to be seventy years old. If you were at home, you would have cares and pleasures and friends around you, to draw your mind away; but here you have so much time that you do not know what to do with it. Don't you think it would be wise to take this time to attend to your soul's eternal interests? You have thought about these things often: haven't you?"

"Yes. My parents were Christians, and taught me my duty; but I am afraid I did not mind them much. I have been very wicked,

but still I couldn't help thinking about these things sometimes. I have thought more about them since I have been wounded than I ever did before."

"You promised God, before you went into battle, that if He spared your life you would give yourself to Him; and after you were wounded, and thought you were going to die, you told Him so again: didn't you?"

"Yes: I believe I did."

"And you still think you will do it some time?"

"Yes."

"*When* will you do it?"

"I don't know," he answered, slowly; "some time before long, I hope."

"Let me tell you what is God's time,—and His time is always the best, because He knows 'the end from the beginning:'—His time is *now*. There is no promise in His word that He will take you to-morrow. He says, '*Now* is the accepted time, *now* is the day of salvation.' You have seen enough to make you feel the uncertainty of life, and the danger of delay. Let me

beseech you, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God now."

His face was very grave as he answered, "I will try."

"Say, 'with God's help,' brother."

"Yes,—with God's help." And so I left him.

We had a great many patients here then,—some very sick and dying; and I could only give him a few words as I passed him, for some time afterwards. Going into the ward one evening to have a long talk with him, I found him in deep trouble.

"I have been reading my Bible," he said, "and praying, and trying to become a Christian; but, instead of becoming better, I seem to be getting worse."

"Suppose you stop trying, then, and give yourself up to Christ, just as you are, a lost and helpless sinner, and let Him make you better. He only can help you; and He wants you, oh, so much! He says, 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.' 'Whosoever will, let him come;' and

‘Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.’ ‘Come, for all things are now ready.’ He has done all that was needful to make your way clear to Him and to heaven.”

“I know,” was the sad answer, “the fault is with me, and I don’t know what it is.”

“Let us look at some of the stumbling-blocks that Satan and our own hearts sometimes throw in our way to keep us back. One is this. We have heard people tell their religious experience in prayer-meetings, and we have read the experience of others, and we think we must feel just as they did, or else we are not right. Is that in your way?”

“It may be that it is.”

“Let me ask you a question. Among all the thousands of soldiers you saw at Vicksburg, did you ever see two who looked exactly alike?”

“No.”

“And yet they all had the same set of features: hadn’t they?”

“Yes.”

“Let me tell you, if every one of them had become a Christian in one day, no two of them

would have had exactly the same religious experience; and yet each one of them would have to 'repent, and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ,' or he could not be saved. You never saw two persons who had exactly the same dispositions, or felt exactly the same on any subject: did you?"

"No: I think not."

"Until you do, you can never find two who have exactly the same feelings on the subject of religion; and yet each one must 'repent, and believe,' or else he cannot get into heaven. You have not exactly the same sins to repent of that any other man has. It is utterly impossible for you to feel exactly like any one else. Do you understand this?"

"Yes: that is all plain."

"Then, again, sometimes we think that we must have very deep convictions of sin before God will receive us. We have heard of those who felt so deeply, and we think we must too; and so we keep trying to work up our feelings higher, instead of giving our hearts to God. We are really trying to bring our convictions

of sin as a *price* in our hands, and claiming our pardon, because we have suffered so much; we keep on looking into our hearts to see how much we feel, instead of looking out of ourselves to Christ. Just as if you should shut your eyes and try to examine yourself mentally whether you could see, instead of looking up at that lamp and taking the light into your eye to prove it. Our feelings have nothing to do with buying our pardon; because it is bought already. All we need is to feel that we are lost sinners in God's sight; that we cannot save ourselves; that no one on earth can save us; but that *Christ can*, and to give ourselves up to Him and let Him save us. Is that plain?"

"Yes. I see now : it is all true."

"Another thing that gets in our way sometimes is this. We think we must read our Bibles, and pray a great deal, and try to do right and keep from doing wrong, and so gradually work ourselves up nearer to the Saviour, and then He will come and meet us. My friend, He came all the way from heaven down to you. You cannot go up one step except by His taking

you. You cannot do any good without His help. You have tried that, and failed. How many times you have determined to do right, and the first thing you knew you were doing wrong! No man since Adam is able to escape eternal death by keeping the Law perfectly. God don't ask you to save yourself that way. He says, 'By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight.' Suppose you *could* begin now and keep the law perfectly: suppose you should never speak another sinful word, or think a sinful thought, or do a sinful act, all the rest of your life, and you should live to be one hundred years old: you have already the sins of twenty years or more to account for. How is that debt to be paid? You cannot pay it. You cannot do more than right at any future moment. You cannot lay up a surplus of goodness to cancel that debt; and, until it is paid, you can never enter heaven.

“Suppose you should run up a long account at the sutler's, and were too poor to pay it, and should go to him and tell him you would never

get in debt to him again: would he take that as payment?"

"No: I should think not."

"No: he could not, and be just to himself. But suppose you had a friend who was rich enough to pay it, and would do so, and the sutler should accept his money instead of yours: could you then go free?"

"Yes: I suppose I could."

"My friend, Christ has paid your debt by the fearful price of His own body on the tree. Never forget this. You could not possibly come into this room at this moment, could you? because you are in it already. Do you understand?"

"Yes: I see what you mean."

"So you cannot possibly buy your pardon; because it is bought already. You might feel until you became deranged,—you might do all the good works that ever have been or ever will be done in the world, and you could not pay for your pardon; because it is paid for already. Christ paid your debt on Calvary. He has suffered in your stead; and by His rising

again from the dead, God showed the world that He had accepted Him as a substitute in your place. 'It is finished,' were the Saviour's dying words. The atonement was complete. You have nothing to do but to accept the purchased pardon, 'without money and without price,' and accept it willingly. He will not force you to take it; but you can have it simply for the taking."

"That is what puzzles me," he said. "How am I to accept it? How am I to 'come to Jesus'? If He was on the earth, as He was once, I think I would go thousands of miles, and walk every step of the way if I was able, to get to Him; but He is in heaven, and I am here. How, then, am I to come to Him in such a way as to be saved?"

"My friend, if your heart does not deceive you, you *have* come very *near* to Him now. These convictions of sin, these strong desires after God and holiness, where do they come from? Not from your own heart; you did not want them, and they have come to you, time and again, when nobody had been talking to you

about these things, when you had not been reading your Bible, and when death seemed far away. But they made you feel uncomfortable, and you tried to drive them away. They have come back to you again. They came directly from the Saviour. He sent down His Holy Spirit to put them into your heart. The Holy Spirit is at work in your heart now. He is making you feel that reading your Bible, or praying, cannot save you; that your good works cannot save you; that you must lean on something stronger, or else you cannot be safe. The Spirit is pointing you to 'The Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.' Can you not look up to Him as He hung in agony on the cross, and believe in Him? that He suffered for your sins, and that because He died you are saved? The dear Saviour is very near you now. You cannot see Him, you cannot hear Him, but you *feel* something of His love as He stands with open arms saying, 'Come and be saved.' Every moment you refuse to do this, you are holding out against Him. You are a rebel against *His government*. He requires you

to make an *unconditional surrender* of your whole self,—soul and body,—all that you have and are, both for time and for eternity, into His care and keeping, to save you just as He pleases, to do with you just what He pleases. These are the terms of pardon and of peace. These are the only terms God offers. He asks nothing more, He will take nothing less. Whenever you feel that willingness to give your whole self to Him, ‘holding nothing back,’ trusting in Christ only, then you have ‘come to Jesus;’ then you do believe in the Lord Jesus Christ,—then you are a Christian, and are saved. That is God’s plan. Man’s plan is to try to work his own way into heaven; God’s plan is, that we take Christ for our Saviour,—give ourselves up to Him here, and He will be with us even to the end of life. When we go down to death, we need not fear; for He is stronger than the grave. When our eyes close on this world, we shall see Him waiting for us on the other side, and feel His strong arm around us; for He has promised, ‘I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be

also.' And when we appear before God to 'give an account for the deeds done in the body, whether they be good, or whether they be evil,' if we really belong to Christ, He will claim us then. Because He has suffered and died in our place, we shall stand in God's sight as if we had never sinned, and so the Saviour will take us into heaven with Himself. This is the only way we can get there.

"Now, how is it with you? Do you feel that you can take that dear Saviour at His word, and trust in Him now? Do you feel willing to give your whole self to Him this night before you sleep? There is no need of waiting. There is no need of doubt or fear," I said, quietly, as I saw he was deeply moved. "You cannot be *more willing to give yourself* to Him than *He is to take you*. He died—that precious Saviour—to show how much He wanted you. We will wait a few minutes while you ask God to show you your heart as *He* sees it; and if you find any thing there pulling you back, and saying, '*Not just now: wait until to-morrow*, or some more convenient season,' pray earnestly to Him

to take whatever it is out of your heart at once. He will do it; and then if you think you can, in His heart-searching presence, willingly accept the Saviour and give yourself to Him, we will go to Him and tell Him so."

He buried his face in the pillow; but I could see the struggle going on, by the sobs that shook him, and my heart went with his to plead that Christ might have the victory,—and so, I trust, He had. In a few minutes he became calmer, and looking up through the tears that still dimmed his eyes, he said, earnestly, "I think I can, God helping me;" and, kneeling by his bedside, together we took his soul and laid it at the feet of Jesus, and there I left him.

His cot was nearest the door, and a little apart from the others. Coming quietly into the ward at twilight a few evenings afterwards, I heard "No. 20" humming a hymn-tune softly to himself.

"Feeling happy, are you?" I asked, as I stood before him.

What a bright smile greeted me! "Yes, very happy."

“Why are you so happy?”

“Because I have found my Saviour.”

Drawing a hospital stool beside his cot, and sitting down, I had a long talk with him about some of the evidences we can have that we are “born again,” and as to his future Christian life on earth, if our heavenly Father should give him one. I gave him a small Bible as his “guide-book” for the way; and he was still steadily and quietly walking in the path marked out for him in it, and ascending into clearer heights, when I lost all trace of him, nearly a year afterwards.

THE
INQUIRER "HALTING"
AT
"REPENTANCE" AND "FAITH."

INQUIRER "HALTING"
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AMONG the soldiers whom I used to see most frequently in the reading-room of the A—— Hospital, was a lame corporal, who was so much better, when he came to us, that he could walk around the grounds, with the help of his cane, although he was too badly crippled ever to be able to march again.

The reading-room was furnished with an excellent library ; and, as he was very fond of reading, he used to spend the greater part of his time there, instead of in his ward.

He was not a Christian, he told me one day when I went to replenish my stock of reading-matter for the wards, from the box of tracts we

had sent to the room ; that he knew he ought to be one,—he had always intended to become one ; but, somehow, he had never found just the right time yet. He used to think about these things a good deal, when he was a boy, but he had put off attending to them until he should become settled in life ; and then, after he was married, the cares of his family and his business had so taken up his mind that he could scarcely find time to think of any thing else. And then, after the war broke out, there was so much excitement, and after he enlisted he was almost always on duty or on the march ; and that kept his mind unsettled.

“But after I was wounded, I resolved that, if God would only spare my life and let me get home again, I would not put off attending to my soul any longer.”

“Yes, I know ; but when you go home you will think that you will wait until after you have seen all of your old friends and enjoyed their society for a little while ; and then your business, whatever it is, will have fallen into disorder, or will have been broken up, in your

absence, and you will think that you must wait until you get that all right again. And after that is done, you will think it best to wait until you make enough money to gain this or that, upon which you have set your heart, or have secured a competence for your family, so that you will not have so much care on your mind. And then, when you have accomplished that, you will find some other excuse for delay,—just as thousands are doing at this hour, who will die in their sins.

“When they are well, they are too busy with *this* world to get ready for the *next*. And when sickness comes to them, they find that when the body is suffering it is a very poor time to attend to the soul; and so they quiet their consciences with a few more ‘good resolutions,’ from day to day, and the ‘convenient season’ is *never* found.

“If you should go with me through the wards to-day, I could show you men who are doing that very thing,—clinging with a mad hope to life, in spite of every warning, until their souls’ suicide is accomplished, — doing it, even

while you and I can see, as we look at them, that they are in the very grasp of death.

“The reason that so many act so, is this:— They do not really want to become Christians at all. (Because a man who is willing to be an honest man next month, or next year, but is not willing to be an honest man to-day, is not really willing to be an honest man at all, if he can help it.) If they could only be sure that they would live for fifty years yet, they would put away all thoughts of God from their minds for forty-nine of them, use forty-nine years for the world, as they pleased, and then give the last year, when they could not enjoy the world any longer,—give the very *dregs* of their lives to God, just so that they could get into heaven.

“I am afraid that He takes very few who treat Him in that way, or attempt to come to Him with such a motive. Very few old men, who have deliberately spent their lives in sin, become Christians. Their hearts become harder every time they resist God’s Spirit, and they go farther from Him; and the love of the world grows stronger with the sinner’s years.

“I have stood beside a great many death-beds in these years in the hospitals, and I have never stood beside *one* who had *intended to die* without becoming a Christian, any more than you do at this moment; and yet very many did so die just as surely as if they had *planned* it all their lives.

“Somebody says, ‘The road to hell is paved with good intentions;’ and what they mean by that is this:—Sometimes, when a sinner’s friends die, or some startling providence awakens his fears, or God’s Spirit shows him his sin and danger, and makes him feel his need of a Saviour, and tries to draw him to Jesus, he says to himself, ‘Yes, I know that I am doing wrong. I ought to do better. It is not right to act as I am doing; and I really will begin to do better, just as soon as I get through with this, or that, that I have on my mind now. I am determined on that.’ And so he says to the Spirit, ‘Go thy way, for this time only.’¹ It is not convenient to attend to these things to-day. I am too busy; I am too sick; I have not time

¹ Acts 24 : 25.

just now; when I have a more convenient season I will call for thee. I will solemnly promise God to do that.' And he thinks that he really will do it. But when the time that he has appointed comes, he has grown careless, or thinks that there is no need for haste, he has plenty of time yet; or he forgets it until the time has passed; or he has some other project on his mind, which he thinks he must attend to first. 'Just this once more. I pray thee have me excused.'¹

"And so it goes on to the day of his death,—cheating himself of heaven, adding to his sin against God by his promise to Him,—by his 'good intentions' to do at some future time what he ought to do now,—by his 'good resolutions,' made in his own strength, and so made only to be broken.

"If such a man could only fully realize, for one moment, to *what* Satan and his own deceitful heart were leading him, where the road he was travelling would end, and how it would end, he would give God, not simply promises

¹ Luke 14 : 16-21.

and good resolutions, but give Him his heart at once.

“You think that you will never act as such persons do. Oh, no! You will not harbour such a thought for a moment. But, friend, you are following closely in their footsteps, and have done so for years; and their steps go down to death.

“For the sake of your own soul’s eternal welfare, do not trifle with that soul’s eternal interests any longer; but give yourself up to Jesus now. You can never have a more convenient season, although you may think that you will. Repent and believe on the Lord Jesus now; that your sins may be blotted out,¹ and your soul saved.”

“I am trying to become a Christian,” he said, some time afterwards, as I stopped to speak with him, on my way through the reading-room.

“I have been reading my Bible and other good books, and praying a great deal; and I never miss a night from the prayer-meeting, when I can help it.”

¹ Acts 3 : 19.

“And do you think that you are making any progress?”

“I don’t know. Sometimes I think I am; and then, again, something will go wrong, and I will get provoked, and slip back again as far as ever.”

“That is, you are trying to *make yourself better* before you give yourself to Christ,—trying to work out your own salvation *in part*, and then that part you find you cannot do yourself, you will let Christ do for you.

“You are trying to work yourself up *nearer* to the Saviour, so that He will come a *part* of the *way* and meet you. Is that it?”

“Well, yes. A man must do his part, you know.”

“What *is* ‘*man’s part*’ in his own salvation, friend?”

“Well, he must try all he can to do right and keep from doing wrong.”

“Trying to climb up into heaven that way is like a man’s trying to climb a very steep and slippery mountain which it is impossible for him to climb alone.

“He keeps moving his feet, and thinks that he is making some progress; but every little while he loses his footing, and falls, and slips back again, if possible, farther than ever. And so he may keep on trying forever, and be no nearer to the top than when he first started.

“And all the while that he is looking to the ground and measuring his steps, he is refusing to look up and reach out his hand to One who is standing right beside him,—the only One who is able to help him, and without whom he cannot ascend one step.

“The Saviour came *all the way* down to the *foot* of the hill, *to you*, friend. And He is beside you, reaching out His hand, mighty to save,¹ and saying, ‘Look to me, and be saved.’² ‘By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified.’³ ‘No man cometh to the Father but *by me*.’⁴

“That is your mistake, friend. You are trying to do for yourself what Jesus *has done* for you. ‘Christ is the end of the law for right-

¹ Isa. 63 : 1.² Isa. 45 : 22.³ Rom. 3 : 20.⁴ John 14 : 6.

cousness to every one that believeth on Him.’¹ He not only redeems them from the penalty of a broken law, but He fulfilled all that law for them. He perfectly obeyed that law, and God has accepted *His* perfect obedience in the place of *theirs*: so that, when the sinner gives himself to Jesus, the law has no more claim on his past life; his sins are all forgiven for Christ’s sake. And the sins that he commits *after* he becomes a Christian, he must take to Jesus too; and, if he truly repents and asks for pardon, God will, for Christ’s sake, forgive him.² That is the only way by which sin can be pardoned.³ Take your sins to Jesus now, friend, and let Him make you clean; for He only can.”

“I am afraid I do not repent enough,” he said, when I saw him again, and found him still without hope.

“*How much* repentance *ought* you to have before you come to Christ, friend?”

“Well, I don’t know. I am afraid I do not have deep enough convictions of sin. Perhaps

¹ Rom. 10 : 4.

² 1 John 2 : 1.

³ Mark 2 : 7. Matt. 9 : 6. Rom. 3 : 25.

I think too much of convictions of sin; but I do not know the reason that I don't feel better, unless it should be that."

"What have 'convictions of sin' to do with your salvation, friend?"

"Well, the Bible says, 'Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.'"¹

"And so we shall; because, if we do not feel that we are sinners, we shall not seek the Saviour. But our repentance cannot blot out a single sin; and a great many repent who will never enter heaven, because their repentance did not lead them to give up their sins and turn to Jesus."²

"A man who kills another may bitterly *repent* of the act; but his repentance can neither bring the dead man to life, nor free the murderer from his guilt, nor save him from the scaffold. There is only one hope for him,—that he may be *pardoned*. If he has any friend powerful enough to obtain that for him, he can go free. Suppose that friend comes to him, in his cell, with an open pardon in his hand, and

¹ Luke 13 : 3.

² 2 Cor. 7 : 10.

says, 'It is yours, if you will only take it.' If that prisoner really feels his need and his danger, he reaches out his hand, takes it, and is free.

"So, you are 'condemned already.'¹ Your trial is over;² you are sentenced to death,³ and only waiting for the day of execution. Your 'convictions of sin,' your 'repentance,' can neither satisfy a broken law, nor free you from its penalty. There is only one hope for you,—that you can be *pardoned*.

"Christ *has bought* that pardon for you, at the price of His own life, and offers it to you, as a free gift, if you will only accept it.

"'No,' you say: 'I must *repent* enough to earn it.' What has repentance to do with buying it, friend? It *is bought already*.

"You say, 'I do not have deep enough convictions of sin. I must feel a great deal worse before I can pay for it.'

"How *can* convictions of sin pay for it, friend? It *is paid for already*."

¹ John 3 : 18.

² Luke 1 : 79.

³ Rom. 5 : 12. Ezek. 18 : 4.

“But the Bible says, ‘Strive to enter in at the strait gate.’”¹

“Yes; but it cannot be a striving self-righteousness that is meant, because Christ spoke that to the self-righteous² Jews, whom He had so often reproved for *striving to commend themselves* to God,³ and to those who, like them, go about to ‘establish their own righteousness,’ and so do not ‘*submit themselves* unto the righteousness of God.’⁴

“Now, this striving after more repentance, and deeper convictions of sin, and trying to make ourselves better before coming to Jesus, is just the workings of a *self-righteous, sinful* spirit in us, to keep us from the Saviour.

“We are *too proud* to take salvation as a gift; we are trying to *buy* our pardon. We are really offering our ‘convictions of sin,’ our ‘repentance,’ as a *price* in our hands; and we think that the deeper those convictions are, the more sorrow we feel, the more *claim* we have on

¹ Luke 13 : 24.

² Matt. 5 : 20.

³ Luke 18 : 9. Matt. 9 : 13.

⁴ Rom. 9 : 31-33. Rom. 10 : 1-11.

God for pardon. And so, if, at any time, we feel our trouble growing less, we try to work our feelings up higher; and when we are in the most trouble, there is a self-satisfied feeling lurking in our hearts, along with the trouble, as if we were *purifying ourselves* and making ourselves more acceptable to God by our sufferings (something after the manner of those who do penance for their sins), instead of coming to Christ at once, as we should.

“No. As long as we ‘strive’ in that way, we are refusing to enter through the strait gate which is in Christ Jesus,¹—we are striving to enter in by ‘climbing up some other way.’ We are simply *rejecting Christ*, and striving² *against the Spirit*, as He tries to *draw* us to the Saviour; and we *resist the Spirit* and *refuse Christ every day and hour that we do so.*”

“Why, how can that be?”

“Let me illustrate. Suppose that you were starving to death: you had not a penny to buy food with, and you were too weak to make the least effort to earn it. A friend comes in, and

¹ John 10 : 9.

² John 10 : 1.

spreads a table with the best of food, which he has bought for you, and begs you to eat of it.

“‘No,’ you say: ‘I must *strive* to get food for myself.’ Don’t you see that you would be *rejecting* that friend’s kindness and love every moment that you tried to ‘strive’ to get food for yourself? You would be *refusing to take* what he had already provided for you.

“Christ *has spread* the table of salvation¹ with the ‘bread of life.’² All things are now ready,’ He says;³ ‘take, and eat.’⁴ The longer I strive to save myself, the longer I refuse to take the salvation which He has already provided for me. The more I strive to make myself better, the longer I refuse to go to Christ and let Him wash me from my sins. The more I strive to *earn* my pardon, the longer I refuse to *accept* the pardon *bought* and *paid for* on Calvary, and offered to me ‘without money and without price.’⁵ Is that true?”

“Yes. I see now.”

¹ Luke 22 : 30.

² John 6 : 32-59.

³ Matt. 22 : 4. Luke 14 : 17.

⁴ Matt. 26 : 26. 1 Cor. 10 : 16.

⁵ Isa. 55 : 1.

“Do you feel that you are a sinner in God’s sight, friend?”

“Yes, I do.”

“Do you feel it enough to make you feel your *need* of a *Saviour*?”

“Yes, I do. I know I need Him.”

“Do you feel it enough to be willing to give up your sins, if God will help you, and to be willing to give yourself to Christ, soul and body, for time and for eternity, to be and to do only as He would wish to have you, from this hour? Would you be willing to become a Christian *to-day*, do you think?”

“Yes,—if I only could.”

“You *can*. God says, ‘Now is the accepted time.’ Now is the day of salvation¹ with Him. *Our* time is to-morrow, or the next day; but *God’s* time is ‘*now*.’ Go to Jesus, then, now,—just as you are,—and you have His pledged word that He *will* receive you.”²

“But how can a man become a Christian as soon as that?”

“*How long* did it take the thief on the cross

¹ 2 Cor. 6 : 2.

² John 6 : 27.

to become a Christian,¹ do you think? Or the jailer and his family, who were convicted of sin, at midnight, and rejoiced, believing in God,² in the same hour? Or the eunuch who was converted in his chariot, even while Philip was telling him of Jesus, the first time that he had heard of the Saviour?³ Or the ‘three thousand souls’ who were convicted of sin, and converted, too, on the day of Pentecost?⁴

“So many think that they must *go through a ‘course’* of repentance and feeling, before God will take them,—prepare themselves, before Jesus will accept of them; but that is not true. Every day and hour that they hold back, waiting for conviction, or striving to prepare themselves, instead of pleasing God they are displeasing Him; because every day and hour they do so, they are *resisting the Spirit and refusing Christ*.

“If you had been a heathen,—one who had never *heard* of God or of Christ, or of the plan of salvation, *until this hour*,—knew nothing of

¹ Luke 23 : 42, 43.

² Acts 16 : 25–35.

³ Acts 8 : 27–40.

⁴ Acts 2 : 37–42.

your sins, nothing of repentance for sin, until since I began talking to you,—*still* God's message to you would be, '*Come now,*' even while I speak. '*Now is the accepted time.*' '*Come,*' just as you are. '*Now is the day of salvation.*' '*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved,*'¹ *now*. Every day and hour that you refuse to do that, you are only *adding* to your sin against God."

"But I need to have more *faith* than I have, before I come to Christ."

"Is faith to be your Saviour, friend?"

"You know that the Bible says that we are saved by faith."

"*Christ* is the *Saviour*, the Bible tells us, friend,—*not* faith. We are saved '*through faith*' in Jesus.² Faith in Him is only the *condition* on which He will save us. *Faith* is only the *arm* by which we reach out and grasp hold of *Christ* and receive salvation in *Him*."

"Would you like to have this, to take home with you, friend?" I said, taking a small, gilt-edged Bible out of my satchel, and holding

¹ Acts 16 : 31.

² Eph. 2 : 8.

it just within his reach (as I saw that his idea of faith was still not very clear).

“Yes: I would like it very much.”

“You can have it as a gift, if you will only reach out your hand and take it; but I cannot let you have it unless you do that.”

He looked a little surprised.

“I will pay you for it. I would like to have it to take home to my little daughter.”

“No: I will not *sell* it. I will *give* it to you, only on that condition. And I do want very much that you should have it. I do want very much that you should take it out of my hand and receive it as your own.”

He reached out his hand, took it, and thanked me for it.

“Now that it is yours, friend,” I said, as he was looking at it, “how did you get it?”

“Why, you gave it to me.”

“What had *you* to *do* to obtain it?”

“Why, nothing, except to take it from your hand.”

“Did your reaching out your hand *earn* the book? Was it any *merit* in you to do so?”

“No : it was only the condition on which you gave it to me.”

“Did that condition make it any the less a gift to you?”

“No : only I would not have got it unless I had reached out for it, I suppose.”

“Your pride rebelled for a moment at taking it on that condition : didn’t it? You would have felt better satisfied with yourself—more independent, so to speak,—under less obligation to the giver—if you could have paid for it, instead of taking it as a gift. You had to get rid of that pride, first, before you could take it. Is that true?”

“Yes : I believe you are right.”

“Now, *salvation is God’s gift* to you ;¹ only, more of a gift than any thing you could receive from man, because God has to give you not only the gift itself, but the *power to take it*,² too.

“Christ is God’s gift³ to you ; you can have salvation only in Him ;⁴ for ‘by grace are ye saved through faith’ in Christ, ‘and that not of

¹ Rom. 6 : 23.

² Phil. 1 : 29.

³ John 4 : 10.

⁴ Acts 4 : 12. Eph. 1 : 7.

yourselves: it is the gift of God.’¹ Christ holds a full pardon for sin,² and a ‘title-deed’ to heaven,³ in His hand, and holds them out to you on the condition of your receiving Him as your Saviour.⁴

“Faith is only the *hand* with which you *grasp* the *Saviour*, and with *Him* receive pardon and heaven.⁵

“Faith, or your taking what He gives, cannot earn any merit for you, neither does it make salvation any less a free gift from God: it is only the arm which the condemned prisoner reaches out to grasp hold of the pardon which his friend has already obtained for him and holds within his reach. If he will not take it for his own, that friend’s effort has been in vain:⁶ the criminal must die.

“Faith, or your reaching out your heart for that gift, is only the condition upon which God will give it to you. He will not *sell* it; it is *bought* for you already. ‘Repentance,’ or

¹ Eph. 2 : 8.

³ 1 Pet. 1 : 3, 4. 2 Tim. 4 : 8.

⁵ Heb. 6 : 18.

² Eph. 1 : 6, 7.

⁴ Acts 16 : 31.

⁶ Isa. 49 : 4.

‘faith,’ or ‘convictions of sin,’ or ‘good works,’ cannot earn that pardon; because it is paid for already, and offered to you, freely. But your pride rebels against taking it as a gift. You are trying to earn it—in part, at least—by convictions of sin; by faith; by repentance; by good works; by something in yourself, which may pay for it in part, so that you can feel more independent of God (so to speak) and better satisfied with yourself.

“That is what keeps men away from the Saviour, so often,—waiting for deeper convictions of sin, and more faith,—pride, and a self-righteous spirit; although they may not be *conscious* of *the motive*. They want to earn salvation, if they can, instead of taking it as a gift.”

“Is that all that a man must do?—simply take it?”

“What else *can* he do, friend? He is an utter, ruined, helpless bankrupt, a debtor to the whole law,¹ dependent upon the mercy of his Creditor for every moment of his life, for every breath he draws,² even. And there is no ‘bank-

¹ Deut. 27 : 26. James 2 : 10.

² Lament. 3 : 22.

rupt law' in all of God's dominions, for him to take the benefit of.

"Do you think that if man *could* have done *any thing* to save himself, God would have given His only and well-beloved Son¹ as a sacrifice, or Christ would have suffered what He did?²

"No, friend: Christ must be all, and *in all*—our Redeemer.³

"What is *left* for man to do? What do you think the Saviour meant, when He said, 'It is finished,'⁴ as He bowed His head and died on Calvary?"

"That His work was done."

"Yes,—dear Jesus!—*His work*,⁵ and *yours*⁶ too. The *whole* 'work' of Redemption was *finished* in that moment:⁷ and His resurrection is the 'receipt' which God gives the sinner, to show to justice, that his debt of sin has been paid to the full.⁸

¹ Matt. 3 : 17. John 4 : 9, 10. ² Gal. 2 : 21.

³ Rom. 3 : 21. Rom. 2 : 21. Col. 3 : 3, 4-11.

⁴ John 19 : 30. ⁵ John 17 : 4. Isa. 59 : 16.

⁶ John 6 : 28, 29. Heb. 10 : 12-19. ⁷ Heb. 9 : 11-23.

⁸ Rom. 5 : 9, 10. Rom. 8 : 34. Rom. 4 : 25.

“‘What must I do to be saved?’ the jailer asks. Do! What *can* you do, except to trust in what has been done for you?

“‘Believe,’ trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, and *He* will save you.

“‘This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent.’¹

“Jesus loves you as you are,—a sinner: the cross has proved that to you.² He bids you come to Him just as you are,—a sinner.³ His Spirit is waiting, at this moment, to lead you to that dear Saviour. Do not hold out against Him any longer.

“Give your heart to Jesus now,—this very day,—and let Him wash it from sin, and fill it with His Spirit, and you will have such convictions of sin, such a sight of yourself, such a view of sin as it appears to God, as you never had in your life before.⁴

“Ask Him, earnestly, to help you, by His Spirit, to give yourself up to Jesus *now*, to say to Him, sincerely,—

¹ John 6 : 29. 1 John 3 : 28.

² Rom. 5 : 8.

³ Matt. 9 : 12, 13.

⁴ Eph. 1 : 17, 18.

“Just as I am, without one plea,
But that thy blood was shed for me,
And that thou bidd’st me come to thee,
O Lamb of God, I come.

“Just as I am, and waiting not
To rid my soul of one dark blot,
To thee, whose blood can cleanse each spot,
O Lamb of God, I come.

“Just as I am, though toss’d about
With many a conflict, many a doubt,
Fightings within, and fears without,
O Lamb of God, I come.

“Just as I am,—thou *wilt receive*,
Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve,
Because thy promise I believe,—
O Lamb of God, I come.

“Just as I am,—thy love unknown
Has broken every barrier down;
Now to be thine, yes, thine alone,—
O Lamb of God, I come.”

“You were right,” he said to me, months afterwards, as we were talking about that dear Saviour whom he *loved*.

“You spoke the truth when you told me that I would have deeper convictions of sin after I became a Christian than I ever had before. It seems to me I get new views of my

sinful heart every day. I used to think that I was a pretty good sort of a man,—as good, at least, as the most of those around me; although I knew I should have to become a Christian before I could get into heaven; but now I can see that my whole life was a sin against God. I can see sin in myself where I never thought of looking for it before; and I feel it so strong in my heart yet, that I have to watch and fight against it all the time. But, thank God! I get the grace and the strength to overcome it, too, I hope.”

He had been appointed a librarian by this time; and, as the reading-room and the chapel were in the same building, he was never, unless unavoidably prevented, absent from the soldiers’ nightly prayer-meeting.

The soldiers usually conducted these meetings themselves in the A—— Hospital. As one “leader” was sent to his regiment, or discharged, another was raised up to take his place.

And very, very pleasant those meetings were, as the hearts of hundreds, still on earth, to-day can testify. The leader usually opened the

meeting with prayer; and then, after reading a chapter from the Bible, and addressing them for a few moments, he left the meeting open for all who wished to take part in it.

One would lead in prayer; and when he had finished, another would begin singing some familiar hymn, and the others would join him. A Christian would have a few words of exhortation or experience. An inquirer would tell his feelings, or ask for prayers. And so the precious hour would pass; and God blessed those meetings to the salvation of souls, in an almost uninterrupted revival of many months.

At one time the wards were nearly full of very sick and wounded men. The convalescents, who were able, had all been sent to their regiments. Our leader had gone, among the rest, and we knew of no one among the newcomers to take his place.

"*You* will have to take the leader's chair to-night," I told the corporal.

"Oh, no! I cannot do it. I am not fit. I never did such a thing in my life."

"*'My grace is sufficient,' 'my strength made*

perfect in thy weakness.’¹ ‘If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God.’² ‘Ask, and it shall be given you.’³

“You know *where* to go for help. We cannot give up our meeting to-night, brother.”

And so he took the chair, and voluntarily filled it, whenever it was necessary, until he left the hospital, about six months afterwards.

Very earnestly he used to plead with his impenitent comrades, both in the reading-room and the prayer-meeting, to “come to Jesus *now*.”

“When I look back over my past life,” he said, in the meeting one night, “it makes me bitterly regret that I did not come to Jesus sooner. My greatest sorrow is that I have wasted so much of my life,—that I let so much of it pass before I received Him as my Saviour.

“I tried to get pleasure out of the world; but it did not satisfy me. I have known more real happiness in these last few months than I did in the whole of my life before. Do not

¹ 2 Cor. 12 : 9.

² James 1 : 5.

³ Luke 11 : 9.

stay away from that dear Saviour another day, comrades who have not found Him yet. There is no need. He is waiting to welcome you now. Oh, taste, and see that the Lord is good, to-night! and you shall find peace and rest to your souls."

THE

INQUIRER UNCONSCIOUSLY UNWILLING.

THE

INQUIRER UNCONSCIOUSLY UNWILLING.

THE Rev. W—— had appointed a meeting for inquirers, in the chapel of the A—— Hospital, one afternoon; and, as he was providentially prevented from being with them, I went to meet them alone.

I found quite a number waiting in the chapel; among them, one who had been seeking Jesus for some time, but had not yet found Him.

“What is keeping you back from the Saviour, friend? What is in your way to Him? do you know?”

“No: I cannot tell.”

“It must be something that *you yourself* have put there, or are keeping there; because Christ has taken every thing out of your way

that could hinder you from coming to Him. He has made the road perfectly clear and free to all who really want to go to Him. The trouble must be in your own heart: nothing outside of that can keep you back.'

"I don't know what it can be, then. I have prayed to Him a great deal, and read my Bible, and tried to do what it told me; and still I cannot find peace. Sometimes I am almost ready to give up in despair, I get so discouraged."

"Is there any sin lurking in your heart which you are still not willing to give up? Any habit which you may have contracted? Any interest, or desire, or plan, that you are not willing to lay at the feet of Jesus and give up for His sake, if they are against His will? Think a moment, and ask God to show you the truth by His Spirit."

"No," he said, slowly, after a little silence. "I do not know of any thing that is keeping me back. I do not know of any thing that I would not be willing to give up, if I could only find peace and pardon. I have thought it all over a great many times, and tried to find out what

was wrong; but I am all in the dark yet. Sometimes I am afraid that I am not among God's 'elect,'—that I am foreordained to be damned, and there is no use for me to try to be saved."

And his despondent tone, and the look of deep dejection on his face, showed how deeply that thought troubled him.

Oh, this *deceitful*, wicked heart of ours, trying to throw the blame of its own sin and unbelief on God! Leading us, unconsciously, sometimes, through mazes of doubt and error, when we think we are sincerely seeking the way to Christ.¹

Oh, arch-enemy of God and man! I thought I was "not ignorant of his devices,"² as he went about seeking souls wandering and lost in the wilderness of sin;³ but never until I came into the wards could I so clearly trace the hand that threw up "stumbling-blocks" of every conceivable shape and size and color in the way of sin-sick souls seeking the great Physician, in the way of captive souls seeking the Deliverer.

¹ Jer. 17 : 9.² 2 Cor. 2 : 11.³ 1 Pet. 5 : 8.

He is never more formidable than when he comes to those whom his roaring¹ might affright and put on their guard, wearing the garments of an angel of light,² and lays down before them a *twisted truth* (misquoted Scripture)³ to suit his purposes, and make them turn back or lose their way.

When this device of his came to the light in any soul, oh, how I exulted in the thought that Christ had conquered Satan,⁴ could do it still, and would bring off those whom he sought to entrap, more than conquerors in the end, if they themselves were only willing to trust in Him!⁵

“Yes: I *know* how that thought feels when we let it into the heart, poor friend; but it is not a true thought. It is only a delusion of Satan, to keep you back from the Saviour. But Christ is stronger than the tempter, and Satan can have no power to hurt, unless there is a traitor inside of your own heart to help him. So the trouble is *in yourself* still. Let us try, God helping us, to find out what it is.

¹ 1 Pet. 5 : 8.

² 2 Cor. 11 : 14.

³ Matt. 4 : 6.

⁴ Matt. 4 : 11.

⁵ Heb. 2 : 8-18. Rom. 8 : 37.

"Do you think that you are *really willing* to become a Christian *now*, friend?"

"Why, yes, indeed I am." And there was something of reproach that I should doubt him, in the look he raised to my face.

"When we talked before, we went over the different stumbling-blocks that were in your way then. Do any of those trouble you still?"

"No: I am perfectly satisfied about them. I scarcely ever think of them any more."

"And you think that you are perfectly *willing* to give yourself to Jesus, and to receive and trust in Him as your only Saviour?"

"Yes: I know I am."

"Have you told God so?"

"Yes,—more than once."

"And wouldn't He *take you*?"

"I don't know," he said, sadly. "It seems not. At least, I have no reason to believe that He *has* done so."

"Either one of two things is the case, friend. Either you have *not really* come to Jesus with your *whole heart*, although you may have thought that you were doing so, or else the Saviour has

done in your case what He never, never did, and never, never will do,—that is, *turn away* any poor soul that comes to Him to be saved. When we search for Him with our whole hearts, He says that we *shall find* Him.¹

“While we read this, friend,” I said, taking a small “dedication-card” out of my satchel, “I want you to pray, earnestly, ‘Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts;’ show me, by thy Spirit, what keeps me back, and ‘lead me in the way everlasting.’”²

“‘I take God the Father to be my God,’” I read. “That means that you are *willing* that He should rule over you, and reign in you, while you consent to do, be, and say only what He would wish to have you. Would you be willing, with His help, to do this, do you think?”

“Yes: I think I would.”

“‘I take God the Son to be my only Saviour.’ That means that you are not to put the least dependence in your obedience, or in your own

¹ Jer. 29 : 13.

² Psalm 139 : 23, 24.

good works, or in any *thing* that *you* can do to make you acceptable to God; but are willing to throw away all dependence upon any thing but Christ and Him crucified, as your only hope of salvation, and *trust* in *Him only*. Would you be willing to do this, Christ helping you by His Spirit?"

"Yes: I think I would."

"‘I take God the Spirit to prepare me for heaven.’ If you receive the Holy Spirit into your heart, you must be willing, with His help, to turn out of that heart every thing that will grieve Him,—every sinful thought and imagination that you used to take pleasure in; for the Holy Spirit will not stay in the same heart with sinful thoughts and affections and desires which are willingly admitted and cherished there.¹

"Would you be willing, do you think, with that Spirit's help, to turn out every thing of the kind, and let the Spirit take and keep possession of your heart for Christ, from now to the end of your life?"

"Yes: I think I would, with His help."

¹ 1 Cor. 3 : 16, 17.

“‘I take the word of God to be the rule of my life.’ Now, the Bible is not simply something to be read morning and evening, as a part of worship; or read a good deal on the Sabbath, simply as a part of our remembering the Sabbath day to keep it holy, and then let what we read slip from our mind for the rest of the time; but it is God’s ‘orders’ to us, which He requires us to obey, and for which He will call us to account if we do not obey them. Its teachings are to be *put into practice*, in our daily lives, just as much as you put your day’s lesson in ‘tactics’ into exercise in your daily ‘drill.’¹

“Let us see what are some of its rules. ‘I say unto you,’ says Christ,² ‘Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you.’

“Now, the Bible *really means* what it *says*. Do you think you would be willing to put that rule into practice?”

“I could try; but that is something pretty

¹ James 1 : 22. Rom. 2 : 13. Matt. 7 : 21.

² Matt. 5 : 44.

hard to do—to love and do good to any one who hates you and treats you badly.”

“Yes, it is hard, friend; but it must be done, or we ourselves cannot be forgiven.¹ It is so hard that only the grace of God in the heart can enable any one to do it.² But God will give that grace, and the Holy Spirit, to help every one who is really willing to obey Him.”³

We went over some more of God’s “rules,” and their application to our daily lives.

“Would you be willing, with God’s help, to try to submit to and obey them all, from now to the end of your life?”

“Yes: I think I would.”

“‘I give myself up to Jesus, soul and body, all that I have and all that I am, both for time and for eternity.’”

And then we talked over what that “giving up” meant, and what it involved.

“Do you think you would be perfectly willing, with your whole heart, to do that now, friend?”

“Yes: I think, God helping me, I would.”

¹ Matt. 6 : 15. ² Rom. 7 : 23–25. ³ 2 Cor. 12 : 9.

“God *will* help you, if you really desire it. He says¹ that earthly parents are not so willing to give good gifts to their children as He is to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask it.

“Ask Him earnestly to help you by that Spirit now; and if you can, sincerely, with your whole heart, so give yourself up to Jesus, and receive and trust in Him as your only Saviour, we will kneel down *just here, now*, and tell Him so. There is no need for waiting another hour.

“But remember, friend, that it is a very, very solemn thing to do this. You are coming into the presence of the heart-searching God. Nothing is hidden from His eye.² It is a fearful thing to come into His presence with a falsehood on our lips,—consenting with our lips to a ‘covenant’ which the *heart* does not ratify. We cannot deceive God. Let us pray earnestly for His Spirit, to keep us from deceiving ourselves, and to show us our hearts as *He* sees them, when we come into His presence now.”

He knelt down with me; and when I had finished, his face was hidden in his hands; but

¹ Luke 11 : 13.

² Psalm 139.

I could see that he was struggling with some strong emotion. I waited in silent prayer for him until he was calm.

“Now, *you*, friend.”

He began by thanking God for His goodness to him; but when he came to speak words of solemn self-dedication, he stopped in the middle of the first sentence,—waited a moment,—and then sprang to his feet.

“I can’t!” And he sat down, leaning his face on his hands, on the back of the seat before him.

What glimpse of his own heart God gave to that poor, tempest-tossed soul, in that hour, I do not know.

What secret sin cherished still—what self-deception—was exposed to his own eye, I never asked him. It was enough that the Spirit, in doing its own office-work,¹ had showed him his true state, and made him feel *sorrow* and *shame* before God, as he sat there, apparently unconscious of my presence, or of any thing around him.

¹ John 16 : 8, 9.

How much I longed to speak a word of comfort! but I dared not do it now, lest his "hurt" should be "healed lightly" by "saying, Peace, peace, when there was no peace."¹ And I knew (oh, how gladly!) that for him there was a "balm in Gilead," and a wise Physician there,² who would Himself³ apply the healing ointment in His own good time.

He was the last one I had to talk to. Some of the others had gone back to their wards; but several were still in the reading-room—I could see—through the folding-doors, open between it and the chapel.

I waited until it was time for me to go home, and let him listen in silence to the "still small voice"⁴ that was teaching him more than any words of man could do.

"I have done this, friend," I said, at last, "more for the sake of letting you get a true glimpse of your own heart, than for any other reason.

"If you had really been willing, God would

¹ Jer. 6 : 14.

² Jer. 8 : 22.

³ Psalm 147 : 3.

⁴ 1 Kings 19 : 12.

have accepted and pardoned you in any moment of these troubled weeks; but you were *not* willing, although I have no doubt that you honestly thought that you were. The trouble was *in your own heart*, friend, although you did not know it; because, if *you* were only really willing to come to Jesus, there is no power on earth or in hell strong enough to keep you from Him.

“Christ is stronger than sin and Satan, and can, and will, draw you away from the strongest power of both, if you will only let Him.

“What it is that has kept you back, stumbling among thorns, so long,—is keeping you back now,—God knows, has known all the time, and perhaps is showing you now, too.

“I will leave you alone with Him, friend. He only can help you.¹ He stands waiting to help you at this moment,—dear Redeemer, precious, loving Saviour!—reaching out His arms of love, and saying, ‘All things are now ready;’² come and be saved;³ come and find rest.’⁴

“Do not grieve His Spirit⁵ by waiting an-

¹ Acts 4 : 12.

² Luke 14 : 17.

³ Isa. 45 : 22.

⁴ Matt. 11 : 23.

⁵ Eph. 4 : 30.

other hour; but go to Him, just as you are, and ask Him to take out of your heart whatever is keeping you from Him, and make you one of His own dear children *now*, and He will do it.”²

While I waited in the aisle a few moments after the prayer-meeting closed, the next evening, to speak to some of my boys who had stood up for prayers, I saw him go past me in the crowd; but as I was passing out I found him waiting in the reading-room, to speak with me a moment.

“You were right,” he said, reaching out his hand as I came up to him. “You told the truth when you said I was not willing. I can see that now, although I really believed at the time that I was.”

“But you *are* willing *now*?”

“Yes,—thank God,—I hope I am.”

“And you have *told Jesus* so?”

“Yes,” he said, earnestly; “I have.”

“And you feel that He has accepted and pardoned you?”

¹ John 6 : 37.

I scarcely needed to ask that question, as I looked into the almost transfigured face before me, and saw in it that "light" which the dear Redeemer brought down from heaven to blinded, ruined man;¹—a light so pure, so peaceful, so glad, so different from any other "light," that I had learned to recognize its first appearance, almost without the help of words.

How dearly I loved to watch its dawning in a face, as the heart received the "oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness,"² or to look upon it as I did now, —lighting up every feature with its newly-found hope and joy!³

"Yes,—dear Saviour!—I *know* that He has. I *feel* it in my *heart*."

And as long as he remained within the reach of my knowledge, I never had the slightest reason to think that he was mistaken.

Not willing! Here is the secret "Achan"⁴ that brings so many troubles into the camp of the sin-sick heart of one who has been taught

¹ John 1 : 4-9. ¹ John 2 : 8. John 8 : 12.

² Psalm 61 : 3. ³ Rom. 8 : 16. ⁴ Joshua 7.

the way of life,—the disguised traitor within the fort that helps Satan to smuggle in thoughts of the “unpardonable sin,” “sinned away the day of grace,” “not among the elect,” “foreordained to be damned,” and all the host of things that keep inquiring souls away from the Saviour, stumbling and bruised, until they are almost ready to give up in despair.

Not willing! Poor, troubled soul groping in darkness so long! It is only *you* who are not willing to come to Jesus, although you may think that you are; and Satan who is not willing to let you escape from his clutches and fly beyond his reach to kill, and find safety and rest in the outstretched arms of a Redeemer’s love.

God is only *not willing* that you should keep away from Him and perish.²

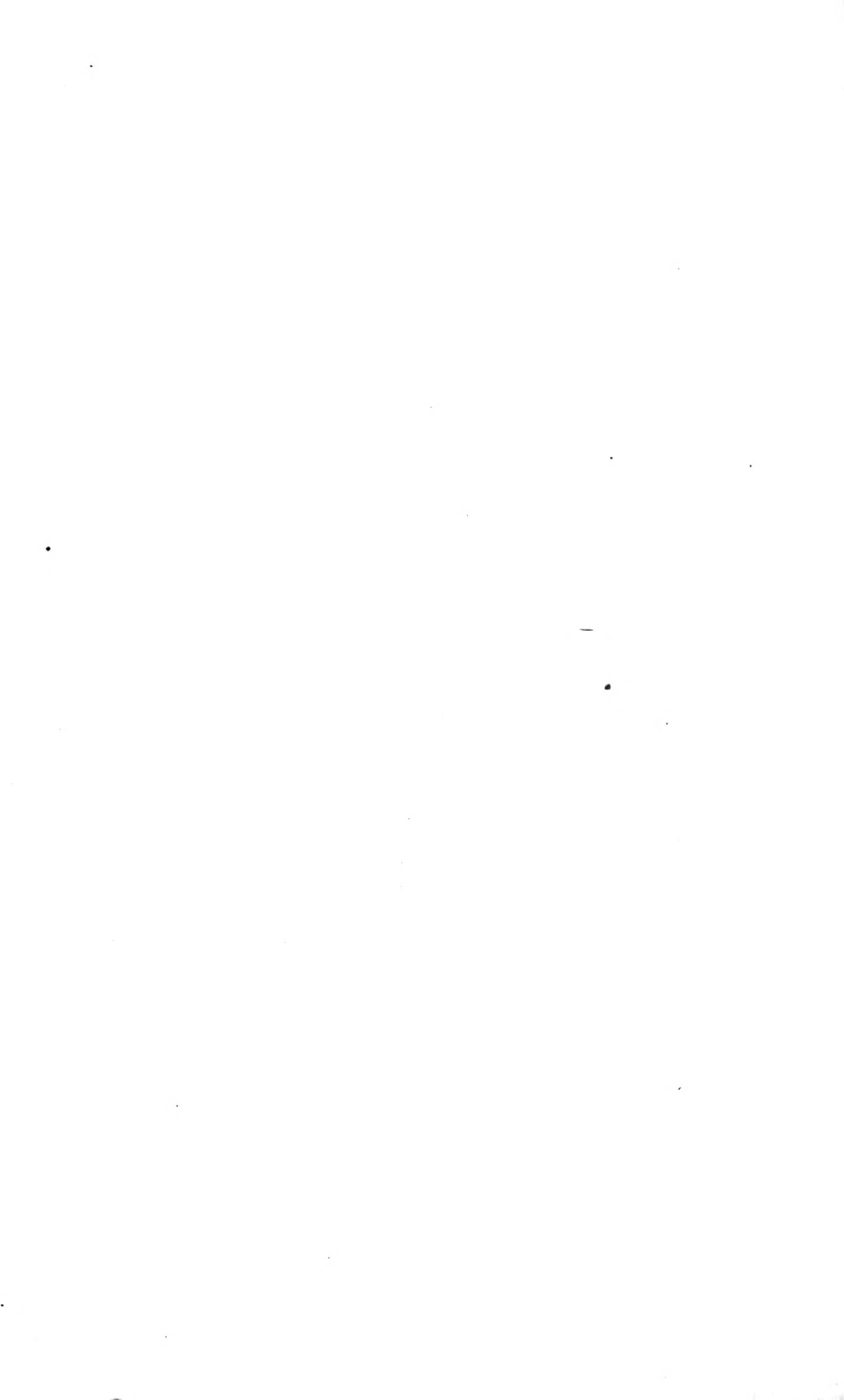
“Ye will not come to me,” pleads that dear Redeemer,³ “that ye might have life.” “Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”

¹ Ezek. 18 : 23, 32. ² Pet. 3 : 9.

² John 5 : 40. ³ Rev. 22 : 17.

THE
INQUIRER
UNDER THE BURDEN OF HIS SINS.

HOW TO "COME TO JESUS."



THE INQUIRER

UNDER THE BURDEN OF HIS SINS.

HOW TO "COME TO JESUS."

I HEARD some one moaning, as if in extreme pain, before I opened the door of Ward 3; and, when I came in, I saw that the sound proceeded from one of the middle rows of cots, from a bed partly hidden by a pillar near the lower end of the ward, which had been unoccupied on my last visit; and, as I glanced around, I saw several new faces on cots nearer to me.

"Where did these men come from? And who is that moaning on cot No. 50?" I asked a wounded soldier.

"There was a railroad-accident a few miles

below this, the other day. The —— Regiment was on the train, on its way to the field, and several were killed. They brought the wounded soldiers on here. Two of them died yesterday, and ‘No. 50’ is so badly hurt that they are afraid that he will die.”

After a little time, I stepped noiselessly to the head of cot “No. 50,” and stood for a moment looking at its occupant.

He was a large, strongly-built man, I could see, with the blood from his wounded shoulder oozing through the white sheet.

He had been stricken down in a moment, in full health, and laid upon that bed of pain. His eyes were partly closed ; but the incessant moaning—breaking into a groan at times, as the muscles of his face would quiver with a new pang—showed me that he was only too conscious of his sufferings.

I took a handkerchief from my satchel, and, bending over him, wiped the great drops from his brow.

“*Poor brother!—oh, poor brother!*”

Something in the tone, perhaps, touched a

chord of "home;" for, as he looked up quickly into my face, his eyes filled with tears.

"Do you love Jesus? Are you a Christian?"

"No! oh, no!" he moaned: "that is the trouble. I have sinned against God all my life, and now He has cut me down in my sins. Oh, if I only could live my life over again! I knew my duty, but I would not do it. I always meant to be a Christian some day; but it is *too late* now. God says, 'He that being often reprov'd hardeneth his heart, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.'"

"There is a remedy, dear friend: Jesus——"

"Yes, I know. I do pray to Him; but He won't hear me. He says, 'I will laugh at your calamity: I will mock when your fear cometh.' I never did believe in death-bed repentance; and now it is too late for me! Oh, if I only was a Christian, I wouldn't care to die; but how *can* I go up before God, with all my sins upon me?"

For the careless and the caviller, plain, earnest words, *kindly spoken*, to show them their sin and danger; but with those who are sincerely

seeking Jesus, sorrowing because they cannot find Him; or with a poor wounded soul like this, writhing under the *terrors* of the *law*, trembling at the foot of Sinai; *gently*, oh, so *gently*, after the manner of Him who would “not break the bruised reed, or quench the smoking flax.”¹

“Listen to me, friend,” I said, coming around and sitting down by the side of his low cot. “*Jesus loves you*,—loved you well enough to *die* for you.² He pities you.³ He has suffered more than you ever can suffer.⁴ He knows how you feel.⁵ Dear Jesus!—He was a wounded man,—wounded to death for you.⁶ Only think *how much* He must have *loved* you, when He hung upon the cross for your sake, hands and feet pierced through with iron spikes, and that dear head pierced with its crown of thorns.⁷

“Only think how much you would need to love any one before you would be willing to suffer what you do from your one wound only,

¹ Matt. 12 : 20. ² John 15 : 13. Rom. 5 : 6-8.

³ Psalm 103 : 13. ⁴ Luke 22 : 44. ⁵ Heb. 4 : 15.

⁶ Isa. 53 : 5. 1 Pet. 2 : 24. ⁷ Mark 15 : 19.

for their sake ; but Christ was first beaten, His body torn with the scourge, until He was too weak to carry His cross, and then they nailed Him to the Cross, pierced through both hands and both feet with burning, festering wounds.¹

“Here, you have those who care for you and try to help you ; there, cruel men stood around, and watched His sufferings, and mocked Him,² their God !

“Think what He must have suffered through all those long hours ! Suffered for *you* and *me*,—dear Jesus, blessed Saviour ! how can we *help* loving Him for it?—suffered until His heart broke with agony, even before they pierced it.³

“How much He must have loved you, friend, to endure all that for your sake ! How can you think that He will turn away from hearing you now ?”

“Oh, yes,” he moaned, “I know. I have known about Him ever since I was a child ; and that is what makes it so much worse now. I

¹ Matt. 27 : 26–51. Mark 15 : 15–38. Luke 23 : 24–47. John 19.

² Matt. 27 : 29, 41, 44. ³ John 19 : 34. 1 John 5 : 8.

have sinned against Him all my life. Oh, how I have treated Him ! and it is too late to turn to Him now.”

“Listen, friend. On another cross, beside Jesus, that day, there hung a robber,—a man who was worse than you,—a man who was so wicked that he was put to death for his crimes; and he turned to Jesus, and the Saviour pardoned him, even in that hour.¹

“So will He pardon *you*, if you turn to Him. He is *able* and *willing* to ‘save even to the uttermost’² all who come to Him, even at the eleventh hour.³

“‘Come, now, and let us reason together,’ He says:⁴ ‘though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.’

“‘Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.’⁵ ‘The blood of Jesus Christ His

¹ Luke 23 : 39–44. Rev. 2 : 7.

² Heb. 7 : 25.

³ Matt. 26 : 6, 7.

⁴ Isa. 1 : 18.

⁵ Isa. 55 : 7.

Son,' shed for you on Calvary, 'cleanseth from all sin.'¹

" 'This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom,' says Paul,² 'I am chief.'

" Paul stood by and took care of the clothes of those who stoned Stephen,³ consenting unto his death.⁴

" He had persecuted God's people, dragging many of them to prison;⁵ and yet God forgave him. He never said to *any one*, 'Seek ye me in vain.'⁶

" Don't you remember how the sick, and the afflicted, came to that dear Saviour, while He was upon the earth, and 'He healed them all'?⁷ He never turned away *one* poor suffering *body* that came to Him to be healed of its diseases; much *less* will He turn away any poor, sin-sick *soul* that comes to Him for pardon. He is the same kind, loving, merciful Saviour to-day that

¹ 1 John 1 : 7.

² 1 Tim. 1 : 15.

³ Acts 7 : 58.

⁴ Acts 22 : 20.

⁵ Acts 8 : 3.

⁶ Isa. 45 : 19.

⁷ Matt. 4 : 23. Matt. 12 : 15.

He was then ; and He says,¹ ‘ Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.’²

“ He sees you, He hears you, He pities you now; and He will pardon your sins and save you now,—oh, how gladly!—if you will only receive Him as your Saviour and give yourself to Him. He has pledged His solemn promise to do that, and sealed that promise with His blood.³

“ You are suffering too much to talk any more now; it is not best for you; but you must pray to God as you lie here. Tell Him just how you feel. Take all your sins to Jesus, and ask Him to wash you from them and make you clean; and He will do it.⁴

“ Ask Him to give you His Holy Spirit to help you to turn to Him and be saved.

“ We will ask Him *together*, now, for *soul* and *body* too; and then, when I go away, you must ask Him for yourself.”

“ Will you pray for me when you go home, too?” he asked, as I rose to leave.

¹ Heb. 13 : 8.

² John 6 : 37.

³ Heb. 9 : 12, 15.

⁴ Jer. 33 : 3, 8.

“Yes: I will take your name,” I said, copying it into my book from the card at the head of his bed.

“I know that God knows it,—will know *who* I mean; but I always like to talk to Him of my men by their names. But you must pray to Him for yourself, too. There is but *one Mediator* between God and man, the *Lord Jesus*.¹

“There is only *One** who can *lead* you to Him,—the Holy Spirit.² Ask God to give you that Spirit to help you to give yourself up to Jesus and receive Him as your Saviour, and He will do it.”³

I did not hear him moaning when I visited the ward again; and they told me that he was better.

The head of his cot was nearest to the door; and, as I always stepped quietly around through the wards, and spoke in low tones, he was not aware of my presence until I stood beside him.

¹ 1 Tim. 2 : 5. ² Eph. 1 : 17, 18, 19. ³ Luke 11 : 13.

* Men may *point* the sinner to Jesus, and show him the way (and it is their duty to do so); but the Holy Spirit *only* can *lead* him to the Saviour.¹

¹ John 16 : 7-15. John 1 : 12.

"Pray for me, won't you?" he asked, the moment he saw me.

"Have you been praying for yourself, friend?"

"Yes: I have tried; but I can't feel that God hears me."

"Perhaps your pain distracts your mind."

"No: my mind is as clear and strong as it ever was; and I almost forget my pain, sometimes, I am in such trouble."

"Do you have a feeling that you are getting better now, and there is not such great need to be in earnest?"

"No: I know there *is* need."

"Do you have a feeling that, if you do not get well, you want to be a Christian *now*, but if you are to live for years yet, you would like to spend some more of them for the world first? Look closely into your heart, and see if there is such a feeling there."

"No: if I know my own heart, I want to be a Christian now, whether I live or die. And my sins are the only things that trouble me now.

"God's Spirit has so many times almost per-

sued me to be a Christian, and I have driven it away. I am afraid it has left me. I am afraid I have sinned away my day of grace, or committed the unpardonable sin, and there is no mercy for me."

"Does the thought *trouble* you?"

"Yes: I can get no rest or peace for it. It troubles me so that I am almost ready to give up in despair."

"A man who *dies* in his sins has sinned away his 'day of grace.'¹ A man who resists the Spirit to the last moment of his life, *has* committed the unpardonable sin, because he refused to listen to, and fought against, the Holy Spirit,—the only One who can lead him to the Saviour;² but, *until that hour comes*, no one can *know* that he himself, or any one else, has done so.

"I have known a great many who thought that they had committed the unpardonable sin; and, as far as I can remember, they every one became Christians (I cannot remember one, now, that did not); and they found that it had only

¹ Eccl. 9 : 10.

² Gen. 6 : 3. Eph. 2 : 18.
27*

been a delusion of Satan and their own deceitful hearts, to keep them from the Saviour.

“Why, friend, *God’s Spirit is striving* with you now! It is *that* which is showing you your heart. If it had left you, you would have no more convictions of sin.

“You need have *no fear* of having sinned away your day of grace, as long as you have *one troubled thought* on the subject; because it is God’s Spirit *only* that puts such a troubled thought into your heart; and that Spirit comes directly from God to you, showing you that He is still waiting to be gracious,¹ and is trying, by it, to draw you to the Saviour.”

“Since I have lain here, it seems to me that every sin I ever committed in my life, has come up before me. It seems to me I have done nothing but sin. Oh, I didn’t think that I was such a sinner!”

“I am so glad, friend!—not glad that you are a sinner, but because you *know* it. You were just as great a sinner before; only you did not feel it. And until a man feels that he is sick,

¹ Isa. 30 : 18.

he will not send for a physician. Until he *feels* his sins, he will not *seek* the Saviour.¹

“The greater sinner you are, the more you need the Saviour. It was just such sinners as you and I that Jesus came to save. He came to seek and to save that which was *lost*.²

“Give yourself up to Him, soul and body, now, and He *will* save you. ‘Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden,’ He says,³ ‘and I will give you rest.’”

“But *how* am I to ‘come to Jesus’? *Tell* me.” And his tone was so earnest that there was almost a command in it. “That is just what I want to do,” he added, pleadingly, “and I don’t know *how*.”

I never feel so weak, so ignorant, so utterly empty of all knowledge and power and wisdom, as when some poor, sin-sick soul looks up into my face, and asks, “*How* am I to come to Jesus?”

Faith is so simple, so very simple, and yet so *intangible*. It is so hard to put that act of faith which unites us to Christ, into *words*. (If, after all, we *can* put it into words.)

¹ Matt. 9 : 12, 18.

² Matt. 18 : 11.

³ Matt. 11 : 28.

Never more earnestly than at such a moment as that, goes up the cry, "Lord, help me now, for thine own name's sake! Put *thy Spirit* into the *words*; for, *without that*, they must fall to the ground."¹

"Jesus says to *you*, friend, '*Look* to me, and be saved.'² '*Come* to me, and I will give you rest.'³ '*Believe* on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved.'⁴

"'Looking,' and 'coming,' and 'believing,' all mean the *same* thing. It is to trust, to have faith in Christ. And when I say, '*Give yourself* to Jesus,' I mean just the same thing too. I will tell you why I say, 'give.'

"You would need to have a great deal of *faith* in this comrade on the next cot, or in the best and truest and greatest friend that you have on earth, to be *perfectly willing* that he should have full power over that right hand of yours,—to let him cut it off if he chooses; to say what you shall do with it, or what you shall not do with it; to give away to him the

¹ 1 Cor. 3 : 6.

² Isa. 45 : 22.

³ Matt. 11 : 28.

⁴ Acts 16 : 31.

whole power over every finger and every muscle of it, from now to the end of your life: wouldn't you?"

"Yes: I would so."

"You would need to have a great deal of faith in him, to be willing to give away to him the full power over both hands and both arms, to the end of your life: wouldn't you?"

"Yes: indeed I would."

"You would need to have a great deal of faith in him, to be willing to give him the whole control over both of your feet; to cripple them with pain, if he pleased; to keep them forever in one place, if he pleased; or, make you use them when he pleased; to not move them one step, without his permission; to keep them, if he chose, from carrying you one step*, even to a place where you wanted to go; to cut them both off, at any moment, if he pleased.

"You would need to have a great deal of faith in him, to be willing to give him the whole power over your feet, to the end of your life: wouldn't you?"

“Yes: I would so.”

“You would need to have a great deal of faith in him before you would be willing to give him the control of your tongue; to let him say when you should speak, or when you should not speak, or what you should say, or whether you should never speak another word to the end of your life.

“Or to give him the control of your eyes; to strike them blind at any moment, or only to open them when he pleased.

“Or to give him full, perfect, and entire control over your *whole body*, as to whether you should live, or die, or what you should do with yourself.

“*Will yourself away* to him (as it were), out of your own hands, into his, from this day to the day of your death. Wouldn't you?”

“Yes, indeed: I should think I would.”

“You would need to have more *faith* in him yet, to be perfectly willing that he should have full, perfect, and entire control over your *mind*; as to what and when you should think, and how you should use every mental faculty that

God has given you; or whether you should have the right use of your reason, or be crazed at any moment, like some you have seen. Wouldn't you?"

"Yes: indeed I would."

"And suppose that he should want your *soul*. You would need to have a very great deal of *faith* in him before you would be perfectly willing to put *that* into his sole care; let him have the charge of its whole interests, for time and for eternity; *trust* it with him, fully and contentedly; give every thought and care of its eternal welfare into his hands; will it entirely into his keeping, and trust, without one doubt, to his promise (if you knew that he had the power) that he would take it safely into heaven when you died.¹ Wouldn't you?"

"Yes, indeed: I should think I *would*."

"Now, that is just *what Jesus wants you to do*. Give your whole self, soul and body, for time and for eternity, into His hands, to do with them just what He pleases.

¹ Heb. 11 : 1.

“Take that *very same faith** that you would need to have in any *man* whom you would be willing to trust in this way, raise it up high above every thing else, and fix it on *Christ*.

“Give your full, sincere, and entire consent to be His; to be and to do only what He pleases, both in this world and the next, and trust *Him*, *implicitly*, with *soul* and *body* too.

“Whenever you are perfectly willing, with your whole heart, to do this, and tell Him so, sincerely, then you *do* have *faith* in *Christ*. Then you *do* ‘look’ to Christ for salvation. Then you *do* ‘come’ to Him and find eternal life. Then you *do* ‘belong to Christ,’ or are a ‘*Christian*.’ Then you *do* ‘believe’ on the Lord Jesus. And in that moment, God, for Christ’s sake, pardons all your sins, and makes you clean in His sight, and saves you from the

* Faith (saving faith) in God is just the *same kind* of faith as the *highest* faith we can place in man; only the *object* is different. It would not be wise to trust any man in the way we have spoken; but it is the highest wisdom to trust in, and rely on, and have faith in, the *perfect* and *Omni-potent* God, to an infinite extent, to the utmost extent of His promises.

punishment of your sins; because Christ says,¹ ‘Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that hear-eth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but *is passed* from death unto life,’ and is saved. Is that plain?”

“Yes; but if I only could think that He would take *me*. I am such a sinner.”

“Somebody (Baxter, I think it was) said, ‘If I should see it written down by God’s hand, “*If Richard Baxter* comes to me, he shall be saved,” I might think that there was some other Richard Baxter in the world, and that God meant *him*. I could not feel perfectly sure that He meant *me*. But when I see it written in God’s Word, “Him,” “*whosoever will*, let him come.”² “Him,” whosoever “cometh, I will in no wise cast out.”³ “He” (whoever it be) “that believeth shall be saved;”⁴—why, then *I’m* “*whosoever*.”’”

“But how am I to *know* it?”

“Your physician told me to-day that your

¹ John 5 : 24.

² Rev. 22 : 17. John 7 : 37.

³ John 6 : 37.

⁴ Mark 16 : 16.

greatest danger was past, and that he thought, with care, you would recover now. Do you believe that he told me that?"

"Yes: I do."

"Suppose that you should say, when I told you that he said so, 'But how am I to *know* it?' Don't you see you would be dishonouring me by doubting my word?"

"So, you must just simply *take God's word* for what He tells you, friend.

"You are not able to write to your friends. Would you like to have me write to them for you?"

"Yes: I would be very glad if you would."

"If God permits, I will write to them to-night, giving them your address, and telling them to write to you. Do you *believe* that I will do so?"

"Yes: when you promise to."

"Now, you know nothing of me, except what you have seen, or others may have told you; and the letter may miscarry; but, still, could you rest contented that, as far as it was in my power, your friends should hear from you?"

And would you be expecting a letter from them when it was time for you to receive the answer?"

"Yes: I would."

"So, we must simply *take God at His word*, and *trust His promise* that He will save us. His promises never fail.¹ He has all power to keep His promises. No power on earth, or in hell, can prevent Him from doing so.²

"Suppose that you had lost all of your property, and were in debt for more than you ever could pay, and were every moment expecting the officers to come and take you to prison.

"You had a friend who was abundantly able to help you, and he could not deceive you. You had treated him very badly; but still you hoped that he would take pity on you in your trouble; and you had applied to him, and were waiting for his answer.

"Suppose that, as you sat in your room, in suspense, tormented by your fears, that friend should not come to you in person, but should send a 'witness' to you,—a messenger, whom

¹ 2 Cor. 1 : 20.

² Daniel 4 : 35.

you knew came from him, and could not lie, to tell you ‘not to be the least troubled,—that he loved you, and was able and willing to help you, and would take all your debt upon himself, and satisfy your creditors and let you go free.’

“Could you trust that promise, so as to throw away all your trouble and be glad?”

“Yes: I would be glad.”

“Now, if we receive the ‘witness’ of *men*, the witness of *God* is *greater*.’¹ God’s ‘witness,’² the Holy Spirit, is in your heart now, convincing you of sin and drawing you to Jesus, and showing you by that, that the Saviour is willing to save you.

“Jesus has pledged His word to you, time and again, that He is willing, and will save you if you will only trust Him, and has sealed that pledge to you with His life.³ What more can you ask?”

“Oh, if I only could *know* that my sins were pardoned!”

“If Jesus should come down from heaven

¹ 1 John 5 : 8.

² 1 John 5 : 6, 8, 11.

³ Heb. 9 : 23. Heb. 10 : 16, 17.

at this moment, and stand beside your cot in bodily form, as He stood beside the man sick of the palsy,¹ and say to you, ‘Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are all forgiven.’ Would you *believe* Him?”

“Yes: indeed I would.”

“If He should send an angel directly from heaven to you, with a special message from Himself, telling you ‘not to be troubled, for He would forgive you, that He *loved* you, and would take you safely into heaven when you died;’ would you believe him, so as to feel *glad* and be at peace?”

“Yes: indeed I would so.”

“If He should send a letter with such a promise written in it, in His own handwriting, and repeated over and over again, as He dictated, and you had clear proofs—proofs which you could not doubt—that the letter came directly *from Him*, and that He had sent it directly *to you*, would you believe it, so as to trust in His promise, and put away all this trouble about your sins from your mind, and rejoice and be at rest?”

¹ Matt. 9 : 2.

“Yes: indeed I would.”

“Now, let me show you *God’s letter to you*, friend,—the ‘last Will and Testament’ of the Lord Jesus Christ,¹ written *for you*, sent directly to you,” I said, holding up his Testament before him, as I pointed out to him some of the passages we have already quoted, and some others.

“‘Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me *hath* everlasting life.’²

“‘Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? that is, to bring Christ down from above’ to you, so that you might *see* Him standing beside your cot, and *hear* His voice as He repeated His promises and invitations to you; but, ‘The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart; that is, the word of faith, which we preach;

“‘That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead,’ and thus that He can and will save you, ‘thou shalt be saved.’”³

¹ Heb. 9. Heb. 12 : 24.

² John 6 : 47.

³ Rom. 10 : 6–11.

“Is that *all* that I must do?”

“That is all,—just as simple as that. Believing in Christ is simply *taking Him at His word*; having *faith* enough in Him to *trust* your *soul* and your *body* into His hands, for time and for eternity, without a fear, *trusting* in His *promise* that He will save you.

“God’s Spirit is in your heart at this moment, waiting to help you to do this. Could you do it now, do you think, with that Spirit’s help?”

“Yes: I think I could. Yes, *God helping me, I will.*”

And so, if man could judge, or his own heart know, I trust he did.

“That hand belongs to Jesus now, friend,” I said, long afterwards, as I talked with him for the last time, before he received his discharge and went home. (He could never do duty in the field again.)

“Never raise that hand against His laws. That tongue must speak for Him now. You have given mind and body to Him. Use them in His service.

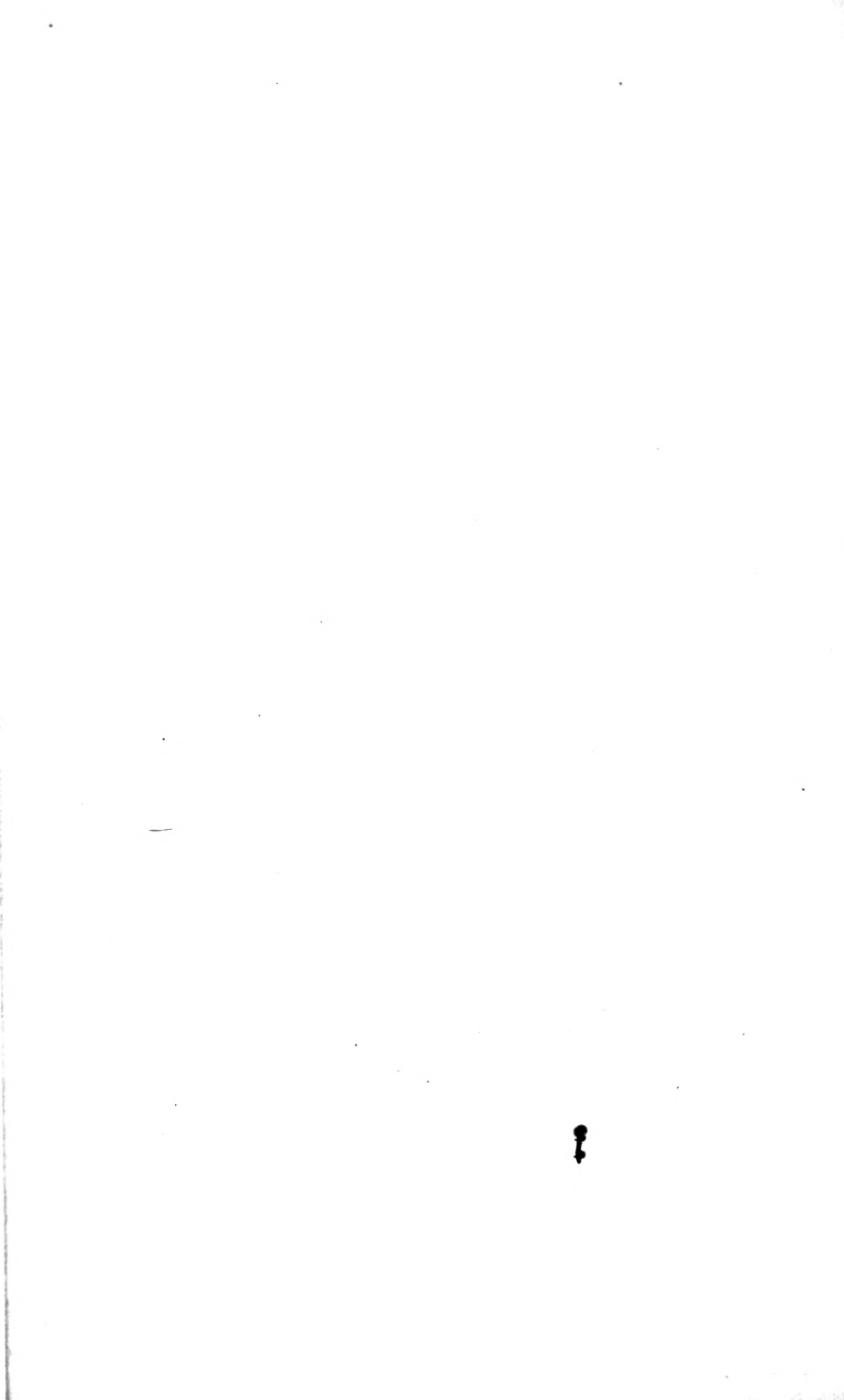
“He has redeemed your *soul*, I trust. It is *His*. And He has placed you on guard over it, under His care and with His Spirit’s help. Never forget that ‘your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own.

“‘For ye are bought with a price: therefore *glorify God* in your *body*, and in your *spirit*, which are *God’s*.’”¹

¹ 1 Cor. 6 : 19, 20. 1 Cor. 3 : 16, 17.

THE
YOUNG CONVERT:

WHAT IT MEANS TO BECOME A CHRISTIAN.



THE YOUNG CONVERT:

WHAT IT *MEANS* TO BECOME A CHRISTIAN.

“I THOUGHT that this ward was nearly empty,” I said, as I came into ward No. 2 and found almost every bed occupied.

“So it was,” said the nurse; “but they brought in twenty-nine of these new recruits from the —— regiment, to-day, sick with the measles.”

And sick enough they were, I saw,—too sick to talk much; and so, with a few earnest words to each, and leaving some little tracts on the stands between their beds, I left them.

The next week, when I visited their ward, I found the most of them convalescent. One or two had died, and a few were still quite sick.

While sitting on an empty cot, beside a sick soldier, talking to him of Jesus, a young, deli-

cate-looking boy, who, by the stripes on his sleeves, I saw was a sergeant, sat down near us and listened.

He was seeking Jesus, he told me,—had been for some time,—and was in trouble because he could not find Him; and so we tried to show him the way to the Saviour.

We (a young Christian friend who was very much interested in him, and myself) saw him several times after this. One time we would find him indulging a trembling hope that he had been forgiven; the next, troubled with doubts and fears, although we thought that we could discover in him many of the marks of a child of God.

One cloudy afternoon I was sitting beside a sick boy-soldier, telling him “that sweet story of old,” when the little sergeant came into the ward, and presently came over and sat down beside us.

He was in trouble again, I saw.

“What is it, little brother?” I asked. “I thought that you told me, the last time, that you had with your whole heart received Jesus

as your Saviour, and given yourself to Him, and that you thought that He had accepted you?"

"So I did; and I do sometimes feel as if I really belonged to Him; then, again, I am afraid to believe it, because I don't feel as I thought I should when I became a Christian."

"You had it all marked out in your mind how you should feel both before and after the change, had you?"

"Well, yes: I had."

"You had read accounts of some wonderful conversions, and you had heard of others, and you thought that you must feel something like what those persons did, or else you were not right. Is that true?"

"Well, yes: I thought I should feel the change a great deal plainer and stronger than I did."

"Let us see what God says about it," I said, taking a Testament from the stand near us, and turning to John 3 : 8.

"The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence

it cometh and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

"Now, we *do* have *whirlwinds* and *hurricanes* sometimes; but they are not common; and because they are *uncommon*, men publish an account of them, while a description of the common breezes of every day is seldom published, because there is nothing strange or unusual about them: so that any one who knew nothing about our *winds*, except what he read in the papers, would think that we had scarcely any other kind than whirlwinds and hurricanes.

"So, God does sometimes convert men by extraordinary means, as He did St. Paul, and gives them extraordinary feelings, like some you have read about; but that is not His common way; and because it is uncommon, an account of it is written down, while the quiet conversions that are going on all around us are seldom written, because there is nothing extraordinary about them; and so you are led to believe that what you read is God's *usual* way of dealing with men, because any other kind is seldom printed.

“This ‘change of heart,’ which takes place when a man becomes a Christian, is something so mysterious to the sinner, that very often, when he gets to thinking about these things, he thinks that he must see strange sights, and hear strange sounds, and have such strong and strange feelings, when the change comes; and that is very seldom true; and so he holds back from Christ, sometimes, waiting for them, and is troubled with doubts and fears, sometimes, even after he is forgiven, because he does not feel exactly as he expected.”

“But, then, I have heard men tell their own experiences, too; and I don’t feel just as they did, either.”

“Neither *could* you, unless you could *be* those same men. You are not exactly like them in any thing; you do not feel exactly like them in any matter; you *could not*, unless you could lose your identity in theirs.

“If every man in this ward should become a Christian to-day, no two of them could have exactly the same *feelings*, because no two of them are exactly alike; and so the religious

experience of no one man can be a *true test* of another's.

"God gives us just such an experience as He pleases, and such as He sees best that we should have; and we must be willing to take just what He gives us. Some have stronger feelings, when the change comes; others, like the old Scotch-woman, can only say, 'May-be the *world* has changed; may-be the *Bible* has changed; may-be it's *me*. Onyhow, there's a *change somewhere*.'

"But, although their 'experiences' are so varied, God's children all have a *family resemblance* to each other, and to their Father. They love Him;¹ His house;² His day;³ His word.⁴ They love each other.⁵ They hate sin,⁶ and love that which is good;⁷ and they have that likeness given to them as soon as they are adopted into His family;⁸ and it grows stronger the longer they stay in it.⁹

"Let us see what it *means* to *become* a

¹ Psalm 73 : 25. John 8 : 42.

² Psalm 84 : 10.

³ Isa. 58 : 13, 14.

⁴ Psalm 1 : 2.

⁵ 1 John 3 : 14. 1 John 5 : 1, 2.

⁶ Psalm 97 : 10.

⁷ Psalm 119 : 127, 128.

⁸ 2 Cor. 5 : 17. 2 Cor. 3 : 18.

⁹ Rom. 8.

Christian," I said, presently, as I saw that he was still not satisfied.

"Two words are generally used to express it. 'Regeneration,'¹ or being 'born again,'² or 'born from above;' and 'conversion,'³ or 'turning.'*

¹ Titus 3 : 5.

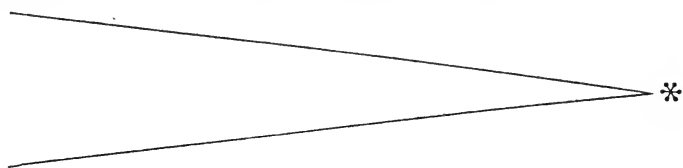
² John 3 : 3-9.

³ Matt. 18 : 3.

* "Regeneration is a spiritual change; conversion is a spiritual motion. In regeneration there is a power conferred; conversion is the exercise of this power. In regeneration there is given us a principle to turn; conversion is our actual turning. In the covenant, God's putting His Spirit into us is distinguished from our walking in His statutes, from the first step we take in the way of God, and is set down as the cause of our motion. Ezek. 36 : 27.

"In renewing us, God gives us a power; in converting us, He excites that power. Men are naturally dead and have a stone upon them. Regeneration is a rolling away the stone from the heart, and a raising to newness of life; and then conversion is as natural to a regenerate man as motion is to a lively body. A principle of activity will produce action. In regeneration, man is wholly passive; in conversion, he is active. The first reviving us is wholly the act of God, without any concurrence of the creature; but after we are revived, we do actively and voluntarily live in His sight. Regeneration is the motion of God in the creature; conversion is the motion of the creature to God, by virtue of that first principle: from this principle all the acts of believing, repenting, mortifying, quickening, do spring. In all these a man is active; in the other, he is merely passive."—CHARNOCK.

“You are, by nature, going away *from* God, —farther and farther every day,”¹ I said, drawing a line with my pencil on the blank page of a book I had in my hand.



“Every sin adds to the distance;² every sin takes you one step farther from God and life eternal, and one step farther on the road to death.³ ‘Turn ye, turn ye; for why will ye die?’ God calls to you.⁴ ‘Look unto me, and be ye saved,’ Christ pleads with you;⁵ and the moment you look to Christ, the moment you, with your whole heart, receive Christ as your only Saviour, and give yourself up to Him, you are ‘re-gener-ated,’ or ‘born again,’ by God’s Spirit.⁶ You are at the *turning-point*, (*) And by the help of that Spirit you are converted, or turned right-about, with your face towards God.⁷

¹ Isa. 53 : 6. Rom. 3 : 10-13. Eph. 2 : 3.

² Isa. 59 : 2. ³ Rom. 11 : 19. ⁴ Ezek. 33 : 11.

⁵ Ezek. 45 : 22. John 3 : 14-17. ⁶ John 1 : 12, 13.

⁷ Isa. 36 : 26, 27.

“Perhaps you have come to that ‘turning-point’ so gradually that you cannot tell exactly the day or the hour in which you reached it. Perhaps you came to it so plainly and suddenly that you can tell almost the moment.

“Perhaps God regenerated your heart so quietly that you cannot tell exactly the day or the hour when the change came; perhaps you were conscious of it the moment it took place; but that regeneration is the work of a moment, because there is no medium between life and death: one moment you are spiritually dead, the next you are alive in Christ. And in that moment, God does not *kill* sin in your heart; but He forgives all that you have ever committed, and takes you out from under its government,¹ and gives you a new power,—a power which you never had before,—to turn from sin to Himself;² a power which He requires you to use every moment, as long as you live, in turning away from sin to God.³

“The moment a man is ‘born again,’ or becomes a Christian, he *is turned out* of the road

¹ Rom. 6 : 14. ² Ezek. 11 : 19, 20. ³ John 15 : 1-12.

to death, and *turns into* the road to heaven.¹ Sometimes, if he grows careless, his feet will slip out of the way; but the moment that he sees his danger he must call on God for help, and turn back into the way of life again.² Do you understand that?"

"Yes."

"Again. If you could have put new life into that dead soldier who was carried out of the ward a few hours ago, you could only tell that he was alive again, by his *motions*.

"First, his heart begins to beat; then he begins to breathe; his eyes slowly open; pretty soon he moves his hands and his feet; then, in a little while, he speaks and walks.

"So, *you* are by nature *dead in sin*.³ God puts new life by His Spirit into your dead heart.⁴

"Then you begin to see and hear,⁵—imperfectly at first, perhaps, but more and more distinctly; then your tongue begins to speak for⁶

¹ Jer. 50 : 3. Isa. 51 : 11.

² Matt. 26 : 69-75.

³ Rom. 5 : 12.

⁴ Eph. 2 : 1-6.

⁵ Eph. 1 : 18. Matt. 13 : 15, 16.

⁶ 1 Pet. 2 : 9.

God, and your whole life moves towards Him, in the way of His commandments.¹ Is that plain?"

"Yes: I understand it now."

"Once more. You have broken God's law,—stand before Him condemned, under sentence of death.² Christ has suffered the penalty of that broken law, in the stead of every one who believes on Him;³ and so, the moment that you are regenerated, or receive Him as your Saviour, you stand 'justified' or acquitted (or clear from the punishment of sin) in God's sight, as if you never had sinned.⁴

"In that moment God 'converts' you, or 'turns' you from sin to Himself, and gives you power, by His Spirit, to keep turning from sin to God; and will give you that power, if you seek it;⁵ and He requires you to use it every day, until the day of your death.⁶

¹ Rom. 8 : 11, 14. Gal. 5 : 25. Jer. 7 : 23. Deut. 26 : 17, 18. ² Rom. 5 : 12. John 3 : 18.

³ Isa. 53. 2 Cor. 5 : 19, 21. Rom. 5 : 6.

⁴ Rom. 8 : 1. Rom. 3 : 24. Rom. 5 : 1, 8, 9. Col. 2 : 13, 14. ⁵ Matt. 11 : 13.

⁶ John 8 : 31. 2 Tim. 3 : 14. Matt. 24 : 13. Matt. 28 : 20.

“Then, as you turn from sin, God *draws* you to Himself (or ‘sanctifies’ you), by His Spirit.¹ The qualities in you which were evil before, He changes to good, and so takes away more and more the power of sin; makes it easier for you to keep from doing wrong, and easier for you to do right; makes you to grow more and more like God, and love Him better, until He takes you up to live with Himself forever.²

“And so God’s plan is to *educate* the Christian (as it were) for heaven while he is upon the earth; to make him hate sin, and help him to fight against it, so that he will *enjoy* being where there is no more sin.

“To make him love God more and more, so that he will *enjoy* being where He is.

“To make him love holiness more and more, so that he will enjoy being where *all* are holy.

“We *must* have our tastes and habits changed to what suits the society of heaven, and our desires *begin* to go out to it, while we are upon the earth, or it will be no *heaven* to us.³ Do you understand that?”

¹ 1 Cor. 6 : 11.

² Prov. 4 : 18.

³ John 3 : 5-7.

“Yes, perfectly.”

“Again: sometimes the *beginning* of this new life is like the sun’s crossing the meridian at noonday. You may not be able to tell just the moment it comes to it, although you may be watching; but you *can* tell that it *has crossed* it, by the *way* that the *shadows* are *cast*.

“In the morning, they fall towards the west; in the afternoon, towards the east. If you should not awake until after mid-day, you could tell that it was afternoon, just by them.

“Sometimes, on cloudy days like this, the shadows are very dim; but still they are there (you see), and you can see them distinctly, if you look closely enough.

“Sometimes, when the sun shines brightly, you can see them very plainly.

“Now, let us see *which way* the shadows of *your heart* fall, and try, by this, to find out whether you *have crossed* the *dividing line* between death and life eternal.

“Before, you loved sin. Do you love it now?”

“No: I *hate* it,” he said, so quickly and

earnestly that I could not doubt him. "I wish I never could commit another sin again, as long as I live."

"Before, you did not love God. You did not want to think about Him, or hear or read about Him. Sometimes you almost wished that there was no God, so that you could enjoy yourself in sin as much as you pleased, without being called up before Him to answer for it.

"Perhaps you tried to believe that there was no God, or only used His holy name to swear by. Do you still feel so towards Him?"

"No, indeed. I *love* Him. The only trouble is, I do not love Him enough."

"Before, you used to read your Bible sometimes, when your parents told you to; but you used to love best to read the *stories* in it. The words of Jesus seemed very dull to you. You would pass them by, or read them with your thoughts on something else.

"Sometimes, when God's Spirit troubled you with thoughts of your sins, and the judgment, you used to get your Bible, and read it as a kind of penance, with a feeling as if the mere

reading of it would mark out some of your sins and make you better. Or, you would pick it up, sometimes, when you had nothing else to read. But you never read it because you really *wanted* to, or *enjoyed* reading it more than any other book. Is that true?"

"I am afraid it is."

"Now, how does the Bible seem to you?"

"I like to read it. I always feel better after I do. It scarcely seems like the same book. It seems as if there must have been a mist, or something, over my eyes when I read it before; the same words now seem to have a new meaning. I can understand it so much better."

"Your *dead eyes* are beginning to *see* with the new life that God has put into your soul;¹ and the Bible will seem plainer to you, and you will see into its meaning more clearly, the more and the longer you use them in reading it.

"Before, you would rather be with people who were *not* Christians. You used to choose for your companions those who cared as little for

¹ Eph. 1 : 18.

God as you did. You felt more comfortable with them ; you liked their ways better.

“If a Christian came among you when you were with them, you used to wish, in your heart, that he would go away. His presence was a sort of restraint to you ; it made you feel your own wickedness more, even though you might make sport of him after he had gone. You felt that there was something which separated you from him ; and you would gladly have taken whatever it was down, and brought him upon a level with yourself. And, besides, you were afraid that he would reprove you for your sins, or speak to you about your soul ; and you did not want to *think* about that yourself, if you could help it. Is that true ?”

“The most of it, I’m afraid.”

“Now how is it ? Do you love best to be with those who hate God ?”

“No, indeed : I do not. When I go out among the boys, and hear them swear, and go on so, I come right back into the ward again. I can’t bear to hear them. It never seemed half so wicked in them before. I wish they wouldn’t

do it. I wish they were all Christians. Sometimes I feel as if I *must* talk to them about it; but something holds me back."

"Do you have the same feelings when you are among Christians, now, that you used to have?"

"No, ma'am. I would rather be among them all the time, if I could. I remember how dry and stupid their talk used to seem to me; but I like to listen to it, now. I wish I was more like them.

"I used to have to go to church and Sunday-school, when I was at home; but Sunday was always such a dull day to me. I was glad when it was over; but now I am glad when Sunday comes. I never feel better than I do in our prayer-meetings when they talk about these things. It seems more like *home* than any place else."

"Before, when you saw any one coming towards you that you thought was going to talk to you about your soul, you felt like getting out of his way, if you could. You did not want to listen to him. Do you feel that way still?"

"No, indeed: when any persons come into the ward that I think are true Christians, I feel my heart warm towards them. I want them to come and talk to me too; and I feel disappointed if they don't."

"Before, you did not care any thing about Jesus (God in Christ),—scarcely ever thought about Him. How do you feel towards Him now?"

"It seems to me as if I had come *nearer* to Him, somehow," he said, slowly, and as if he were trying to look into his heart and put what he found there into words. "I like to hear people talk about Him; I never get tired listening to them. I love to read about Him; and when I think how I used to treat Him, you don't know how sorry I feel. I wonder how I could be so ungrateful to Him, when He loved me so much. I think I can never act that way again. I feel as if my heart was *going out* to Him, somehow. Yes, I know I *do* love Him; but, oh! not *one-half* as much as I know I ought to."

"You did not feel that way three months ago?"

"No, ma'am. I never felt just so in my life before."

"Your *old* heart did not have any such feelings. What has caused such a change in it?"

"*God* must have done it. Nothing else could."

"*How* did He do it?"

"By giving me a *new* heart, I suppose."

He sat in deep thought for a little time; and, as I watched his face, I could see the shadows gradually passing away, and the light of peace coming into it.

"I do hope," he said, slowly, at last,—“yes, I think I *may* hope,—that I have been born again; that I *belong* to *Jesus* now.” (I had used that expression so often in my first talks with him.)

"I know I do *want* to be His, with all my heart."

"If you think that it would be any help to you," I said, presently, "you might enter into a 'covenant'¹ or agreement with God now, and then renew your vow in public, when you

¹ 2 Chron. 24 : 31.

unite with some church, if God should let you live to do so.

“Write it down, if you choose, so that you can carry it with you, to look at every little while and see whether you have kept your part of the agreement. God always keeps *His* promises. You will find them in the Bible.

“You might write something like this,” I said, giving him a “dedication card,” on which were words like the following:—

“‘O Lord, I am not worthy to come to Thee; but Thou hast invited me to do so, and this day” (the date) “I do, with my whole heart, accept that invitation. I do, this day, with my whole heart, take Thee to be my God; the Bible to be the rule of my life; Thy Spirit to prepare me for heaven; the Lord Jesus Christ to be my only Saviour; and I do, this day, with my whole heart, give myself up to Him, altogether, soul and body, all that I have and am, both for this world and the next; and I ask Thee, earnestly, to help me to keep this agreement faithfully, even to the end.’”

We went over *his* part of the covenant, sen-

tence by sentence, and talked over what each one involved as applied to his heart and life.

“Could you, with your *whole* heart, sign that, do you think?”

“Yes: I think I could.”

“It is a very, very solemn thing to enter into such a covenant with God; but, if you think you can do so sincerely, find some quiet place, if possible, where there is no one but God and your own soul; and then, after an earnest prayer to God to help you, by His Holy Spirit, sign your consent to be the Lord’s. Will you do this?”

“Yes: God helping me, I will.”

“If I can only hold out,” he said, after a few minutes’ silence. “I have seen so many who started to be Christians and then turned back.”

“You did not need to take enough food, before you left home, to last you for three years, did you?”

“Why, no.” And he looked as if he thought the question a strange one.

“You did not even carry a loaf with you

from home. Government promised to furnish you with food while you were in its service, and you trusted it without any fear. If you had doubted the promise, you would have dishonoured the government.

“So, Christ has promised to furnish you with daily supplies of grace and strength sufficient for all your needs;¹ and you must not only *trust* Him for *to-day*, but for *to-morrow*, and the next day, and every day of your life, even to the end.

“But the ‘Commissary’ may be full of the best of food, yet, unless you ‘draw’ it and use it, it will not do you any good: will it?”

“No.”

“So, God’s storehouse is always full of food for your soul; but He has not promised to give it to you unless you ask² for it. ‘Ask, and it shall be given you,’ He says;³ and you need to draw *fresh supplies* from Him *every day*, or your soul will grow lean and faint.

“I shall not see you again, brother, perhaps” (he was expecting to return to camp before my

¹ 2 Cor. 12 : 9.

² Ezek. 36 : 37.

³ Matt. 7 : 7.

next visit), "and I want to talk a little while about your future life in this world, if God should give you one.

"If you are a Christian, if you belong to Christ, you must remember that you are not your own now; you are 'bought with a price;'¹ you are *the Lord's*.

"When you came into the army, you gave up your will to your country for three years. Your will says now, 'Go home a little while, and see the dear ones there.' Your country says, 'Stay where you are,' and you have to obey *it*.

"So, when you enlist under Jesus, you give up your will into His hands,—not for three years only,—for He will not accept volunteers for any term of service less than life. If you leave Him before the time is out, what are you?"

"A deserter, I suppose," he said, slowly, lifting his eyes to my face as he spoke.

"Yes. That is a hard word; but it is true. And the penalty of desertion is—what?"

"Death."

¹ 1 Cor. 6 : 20.

“Being shut out of heaven forever.¹

“Religion is not something that you can pick up and carry until it becomes inconvenient to you, and then lay it down and go back and get it when you please. You need to carry it every moment of your life. You need to carry it into all your business transactions, into all your duties, into all your pleasures, into all your intercourse with those around you.² It must be the *controlling principle* of your thoughts and words and looks and actions. God puts that living principle into your heart, and requires you to use it at all times and under all circumstances. His grace is sufficient to help you in every time of need; and He has promised to give it to you always, if you seek it from Him.

“You have read Bunyan’s ‘Pilgrim’s Progress’?”

“Oh, yes.”

“You remember what a time Christian had climbing the ‘hill Difficulty’?”

“Yes; I do.”

¹ Heb. 10 : 26-39.

² 1 Cor. 10 : 31.

“The ‘hill Difficulty’ is before you, on your road to the ‘Celestial City,’ brother. Every ‘pilgrim’ has to climb it; and he can do so in the strength which God gives, only.

“You come to it when you have to battle with evil habits which you may have contracted, or evil propensities and passions which seem now to be dead, but are only suspended. For instance, do you ever get angry?”

“Yes, ma’am. I used to. I am naturally quick-tempered; and I used to say and do things when I was angry that I was sorry for afterwards. But I haven’t been angry for some time, now.”

“No: because, for one reason, perhaps, you haven’t been tempted very much lately. You may think that you have got rid of your temper, because you do not feel it now, and so be taken by surprise and overcome, or be discouraged, because you were not on guard, watching for it. But you are *only human* yet, brother, and will be so as long as you stay in this world; only, if you are a true Christian, you have (by the Holy Spirit) *put your human nature under*

*the controlling grace of God;*¹ and He has given you a *new power* to overcome what is evil in* it:² and so, whenever you feel your temper, or any evil passion or desire, rising in your heart, you must send up a quick prayer to God for help to fight it down. Cry, 'Lord, help me!' with all your heart, and the help will come;³ and you will grow stronger after every such victory, and your enemies will grow weaker, until at last the Captain of your salvation⁴ will bring you off 'more than conqueror'⁵ over them all, in heaven.

"You come to the hill 'Difficulty' when the world comes into conflict with your religion, or when you have to give up some worldly interest or pleasure which you feel that you cannot obtain or keep with God's blessing. Do not turn to the right or left from the strait and narrow path⁶ God has marked out for you to walk

¹ Rom. 12 : 1. Rom. 6 : 6-23.

² Ezek. 11 : 19, 20. Rom. 8 : 9. ³ Psalm 145 : 18, 19.

⁴ Heb. 2 : 10. ⁵ Rom. 8 : 37. ⁶ Matt. 7 : 14.

* God does not give us any *new faculties* in conversion: He only gives us a *new power* to control and guide those that He has already given us.

in, for the sake of any earthly good. Heaven is worth more than they all. Do not let any thing come between you and it. The only road to the 'Celestial City,' in such a case, lies right over the top of the 'hill.' God will help you to climb it.

"When you go out among your companions, and they see that you are changed, some of them may try to turn you back to your old self again; but keep your eye fixed on the 'shining light' at the end of the way, and go straight forward in God's strength. They will respect you the more in their hearts if you do, and God will strengthen you.

"You must not think that because you do not belong to a church, your sin will not be so great if you break God's laws, or that He will excuse sin in you under any circumstances. His laws are just as binding on you at one time or in one place as in another.

"You must not think that you will wait until you unite with some church before you begin to serve God with your whole heart. You can do a great deal of work for Him among your com-

panions. You will find plenty of opportunities, if you watch and seek and pray for them. You must begin to speak for Christ at once, too; no matter how hard it may be for you to do so at first. 'The green cross' (says some one) 'is very heavy; but it grows lighter the longer you carry it.'

"You will often be thrown among those who do not love God,—perhaps despise His word. You may think, 'It is no use to speak to them about their wrong-doing, or show that I disapprove of it. It will do no good; they will only laugh at me, or perhaps get angry;' but the true reason would be, you have not *courage* to acknowledge yourself to be one of God's children; and so, by your silence, you encourage their sin, and virtually deny Christ; and He has said,¹ 'Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.'

"You may think, when you are with such, 'I cannot kneel down and pray before them. They will make sport of me. I will wait until

¹ Matt. 10 : 33. 2 Tim. 2 : 12. Luke 12 : 9.

they are asleep, or will pray after I lie down. I can talk to God just as well that way. He looks at the heart.' And so He does; but the truth would be, you were ashamed of Jesus; and He has said¹ that whosoever is ashamed of Him before men, of them He will be ashamed before his Father, and before His angels.

"That would be trying to go around the foot of the 'hill Difficulty,' thinking that you could come out into the 'king's highway' all right on the other side; and you never can do that.

"If you are one of Christ's soldiers, you are only a 'new recruit' in the Lord's army yet, and cannot expect to endure long marches and hardships like a veteran; but you must exercise the strength He gives you. Every evil overcome makes sin weaker and grace stronger.

"You have all your battles to fight yet,² and you need to 'put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil,'" I said, turning to Eph. 6th chapter, and reading from the eleventh verse. And then we talked a little while about the different

¹ Mark 8 : 38. Luke 9 : 26.

² 1 Tim. 6 : 12.

parts (or "pieces") of that armour, and how to use them.

"If you are a Christian, you are only a babe in Christ¹ yet, and must creep before you can walk; but you must not be contented with *creeping*. You must not think that if you have 'got religion,' as some call it, that is enough. You must *keep* it, and *use* it, and *seek* for *more* all the time. The command is to '*grow* in grace,² and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,' until you arrive at the stature of a perfect man in Him;³ and to do this, you must study your Bible, attend meetings for worship whenever you possibly can, and watch and pray.

"Prayer is simply *talking* to *God*,—going to Him with the simple faith of a little child, as he tells his father all his wants and troubles, feeling *sure* that that kind father will listen and will help him.

"'Prayer' (says some one) 'is the *telegraph-wire* between God and our souls; and Jesus

¹ Matt. 18 : 3. 1 Pet. 2 : 2.

² 2 Pet. 3 : 18.

³ Eph. 4 : 13-16.

sits at the other end of the wire, waiting to receive our "despatches" and send answers back to us.'

"We can find no place on earth from which a message cannot reach Him. No matter where we may be, or in what we may be employed, we can talk to God, and His ear is ever waiting to hear our faintest whisper, and His hand always ready to help us.

"You need to talk to God in prayer every day,—many times a day, perhaps;¹ you need to go to Him for the pardon of every sin.² You have a great deal to thank Him for, and a great deal to ask of Him.³ He cares for your *body* as well as for your *soul*.⁴ Whenever you are in trouble about your temporal welfare, tell Him all about it. He pities you as a father pities his children,⁵ and will help you.⁶

"If you are tempted, remember that Christ was tempted too, more than you can be.⁷ He knows what it is, and is able to help you.⁸

¹ Psalm 55 : 17. Dan. 6 : 10.

² Eph. 5 : 20. 1 John 2 : 1.

³ Phil. 4 : 6.

⁴ Matt. 10 : 29-32. ⁵ Psalm 103 : 13.

⁶ Psalm 50 : 15.

⁷ Heb. 4 : 15, 16. ⁸ Heb. 2 : 18.

“If you are sick, remember that Jesus suffered pain.¹ He knows how that feels, too. Ask Him to take it from you,² if He sees best, or bless it to you.³

“Every thing that concerns you interests Him. There is nothing too small for His notice.⁴

“Wherever you go, ask Him to go with you. You do not know what danger you are going into; you need His protection. You do not know what temptation you are going into; you need His help.

“That is a very good way to find out whether we are going to the *right place*. We could not ask Him to go with us to the dance, to the card-table, to the theatre, to the saloon, or to any place of sinful amusement.

“That is a good way to find out whether we are going to *do the right thing*. Whatever we cannot ask God to bless us in doing, must be wrong.

¹ John 19 : 1-31.

² James 5 : 13. Jer. 17 : 14. Psalm 103 : 3.

³ Heb. 12 : 5-14.

⁴ Luke 12 : 7.

“*Watch.*¹ The true soldier of the cross remembers that enemies within and all around him are watching for his soul, and so he must *always stand on guard*. He remembers that all the time, and everywhere, God sees him; and he loves God, and fears to offend Him, and so he tries to live as in His sight.

“You need to watch your heart. You know how apt evil thoughts are to creep into it; and a sinful thought or desire, if kept in the heart and cherished there, is as much a sin in God’s sight as a sinful act;² and, if you let it stay there, it will send out sinful words and actions too.³ Try to keep your heart *clean* in God’s sight.⁴ He is looking into it every moment. Do not let any thing stay in it that you would not be willing to have Him see.

“Watch your words and actions, not only for your own sake, but for the sake of those around you.⁵ Your companions will watch you closely, although you may not know it, and judge of

¹ Matt. 26 : 41. Mark 13 : 37.

² Matt. 5 : 28. 1 John 3 : 15.

³ Matt. 25 : 19. Mark 7 : 21-24.

⁴ Matt. 6 : 8. ⁵ Col. 4 : 5.

religion by what they see in you. Take care, then, that you do not bring a reproach upon the name of Jesus. You must try to be a 'recruiting officer' for Him, rather; try to get your companions to enlist under Him and love Him too.¹

"Study God's word prayerfully.² If possible, do not let a day pass without reading it.³ It is the 'rule' given you to measure your life by. It is a copy of the 'constitution and laws' of God's government. It is the 'book of Regulations and Tactics' for His soldiers; it is the 'guide-book' to heaven.⁴ Whenever you are in doubt as to what is right or wrong, go to it for direction. It, read in the light of the Spirit, is the only sure guide.⁵

"You know that when you are marching there are three ways of 'keeping step.' One is, by keeping step with the man before you; but, then, he may be 'out of time.' Another is, by watching the shoulders of those in advance of you; but these may all have the wrong step.

¹ Rev. 22 : 17. Ezek. 3 : 17-22.

² John 5 : 39.

³ Acts 17 : 11. ⁴ Psalm 119 : 105.

⁵ Psalm 119.

The best and safest way is to listen for yourself, and keep time with the *music*.

“So, whenever you are in doubt as to whether any thing is right, do not watch your neighbour and follow him: he may be wrong. Do not pin your faith to any ‘doctrines or commandments of men:’ they may all be wrong.¹ The only safe plan is to study God’s orders, prayerfully, and keep step by His word.²

“You need to ‘examine’ yourself whether ye be in the faith³ or not, very often. Perhaps you cannot tell by your *feelings* in any *one* day or moment whether you are *really* in the faith or not, because your feelings may be acted upon by some other influences; although you may scarcely suspect it at the time. The safest plan is to judge by the *general tenor* of your *life*;⁴ to examine your heart and life by the light of God’s Word and Spirit, and see *which way* the ‘shadows’ fall,—whether towards God, or towards the world.

“Whenever you feel your love for God grow-

¹ Matt. 15 : 9.

² Prov. 3 : 5, 6.

³ 2 Cor. 13 : 5. Gal. 6 : 3, 4.

⁴ Psalm 139 : 23, 24.

ing weaker, or sin seems less hateful to you, *take care!* your soul is in danger;¹—you are falling asleep on guard, and the penalty of doing that is—what?”

“Death.”

“You are neglecting some duty, and, while you were not watching, an enemy has crept into the camp of your heart. You must find out what it is, at once, and cry to God for help, and never rest until it is driven out, or killed.

“When you go home, if God spares you until then, it will be your duty and privilege, as soon as possible, to unite with some church, because the church is an institution of God’s own appointment on earth;² and the best plan will be for you to study the doctrines and rules of the different orthodox churches, and, asking God’s Spirit to help you, compare them with the Bible, and whichever one you think ‘keeps step’ best by it—whichever you feel the most at home in—is the one for you to join.

¹ John 15 : 6.

² Matt. 28 : 19. Eph. 4 : 11, 12. Heb. 10 : 25. Acts 2 : 42.

“But joining a church is only putting on the uniform after you enlist. Did putting that on make you a *soldier*?”

“No.”

“What did?”

“Putting down my name and taking the oath.”

“You ‘put down your name’ and ‘take the oath’ as a soldier of Jesus, when you receive Him as your only Saviour, and give yourself to Him. If you had deserted after you enlisted, and before you got your uniform, could they have punished you?”

“Yes: just the same.”

“If you had put on a uniform without enlisting, what would you have been?”

“Only a citizen in soldier’s clothes.”

“And you would have had no right to wear them. You would be appearing under false colours—*professing* to be what you were *not*; and that is sin.

“So, putting on the uniform of a church will not make any one a Christian; neither is it always a sure sign of one. Many a one wears

that who has no right to be numbered among God's children; but that does not make it any the *less* your *duty* and mine, brother, not only to enlist, but to put on the uniform, and join some church-regiment in God's army on earth.

"You might think that you could enlist and then go off by yourself and fight just as well as if you were in a regiment; and so perhaps you might; but that is not the way that government has ordered it; neither is it the plan of God's government on earth.

"This world is the enemy's country, and God has appointed that the soldiers of the cross should be banded together in a church, so that they can do battle with the enemy of souls better, and help and defend and comfort each other.

"Then, by putting on the uniform, you profess, to all who see you, that you are a soldier.

"So, by uniting with the church, you confess¹ Christ before men, as He has commanded you to do, and profess to be His disciple, and are admitted to the church-privileges of God's

¹ Matt. 10 : 32. Acts 8 : 37. Rom. 10 : 9, 10.

children. But only by *really belonging* to Jesus, and being *true* and *faithful* to Him to the end of your life on earth, can you have a *right* to the privileges of a Christian, and a title, through Christ, to the inheritance that He has purchased for you in heaven.¹

“‘He that shall endure to the end,’ Jesus told us, while He lived on earth,² ‘the same shall be saved.’

“He sent this message to us after He went back to heaven:—

“‘Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.’³

“‘Hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.’

“‘To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne.’”⁴

I have never seen my little sergeant since; but my young friend saw him frequently for some time afterwards in camp, and brought me

¹ 2 Tim. 4 : 7, 8.

² Matt. 24 : 13.

³ Rev. 2 : 10.

⁴ Rev. 3 : 11, 21.

back the good news that he was still "holding out" (as he expressed it), "and felt more and more like doing so, every day."

I had lost all trace of him for some months, when, one day, as I was talking to one of the new nurses in a ward in another hospital (a Christian, he told me), he asked me if I remembered Sergeant L. "He was sick for some time in the B—— Hospital, perhaps you remember."

"Oh, yes: I remember him distinctly. Where is he now? Do you know him?"

"Yes: I know him very well. He belongs to my company in the —— regiment. It is quartered in the L—— Barracks now, and I go down and see the boys, sometimes, when I have time.

"I saw Sergeant L—— the other night, and we had a long talk together. I told him that you visited this hospital too; and he told me to tell you that 'he was holding out yet, and he hoped that God would help him to do so, as long as he lived.'"

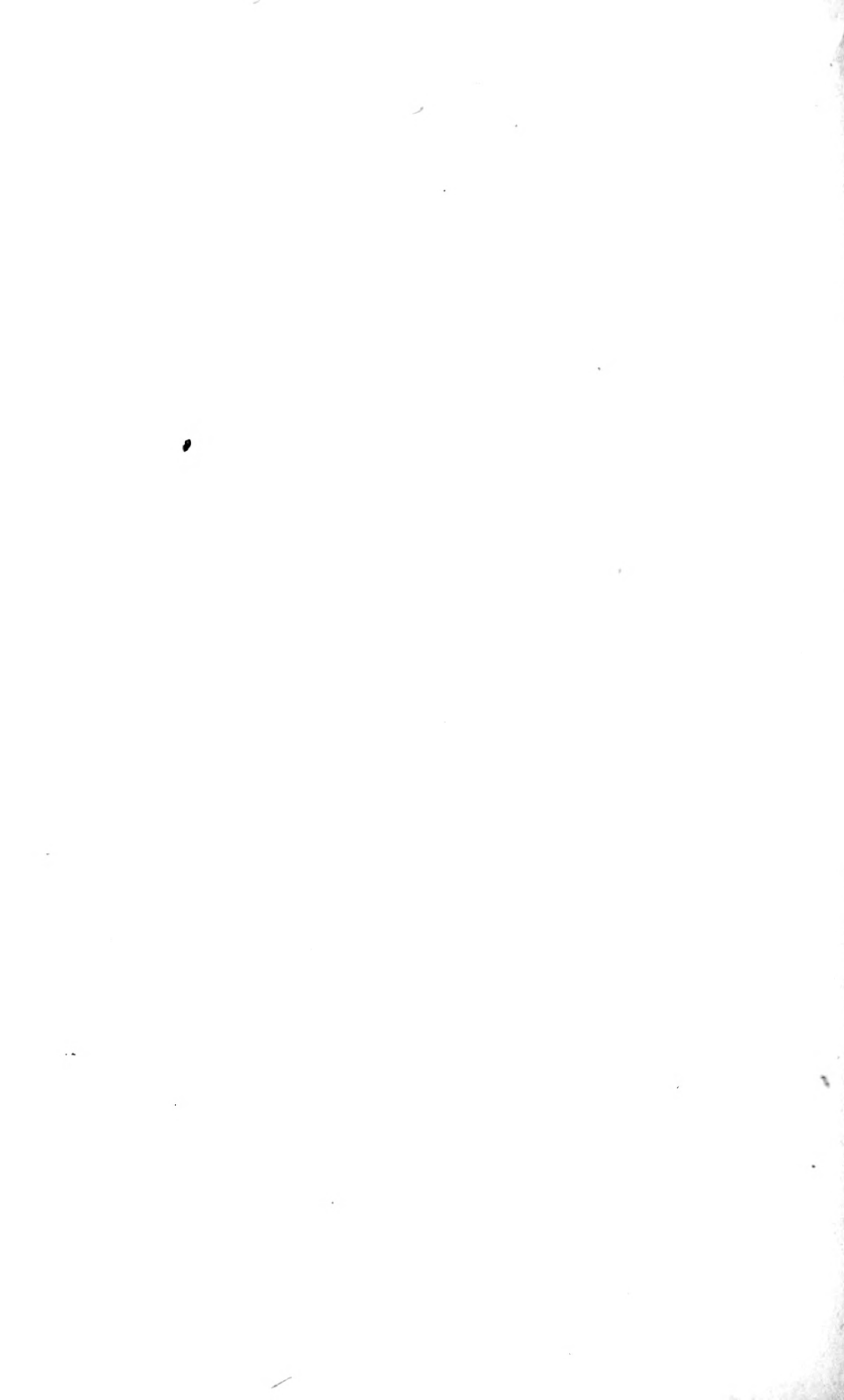
"Oh, I am so glad!—so glad!"

"I never saw such a change in a boy in my

life as there is in him since he was sick that time. He used to be pretty wild, and never cared to hear about any thing good ; but now he is so steady, and reads his Bible, and goes to church, always, when he can, and never joins the boys in any wickedness ; and yet he is always so cheerful and kind that they can't help liking him.

“He told me about the change that had come to him ; and now we have a little talk about these things almost every time that I see him.”

I gave the nurse some little books and messages to carry to him. His regiment was sent to the field shortly afterwards, and my little sergeant passed away from my sight, most probably until I meet him (as I hope) “up yonder.”



THE
NEGLECTED OPPORTUNITY.

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THE NEGLECTED OPPORTUNITY.

“WHY! who is this? How did *you* get here, little brother?”

I had slipped into Ward Two, after the lamps were lighted, to see some of the new patients who had reached us from the South that day, and just as I opened the door my eyes fell on the strangest sight. The bed nearest me had been newly filled with straw, and upon the top of it, his little limbs scarcely reaching more than half its length, lay the oddest, oldest-looking boy, with a pair of bright black eyes looking at me out of a little, thin, withered face.

“I came up on the boat. I belong to the —— regiment.” (I have forgotten it. I wish I could forget the face as well.) “A drummer-boy?” “No: a soldier.” And what pride there was in that shrill, childish voice as he told me

the battles he had been in! He! That child! Afterwards I learned his story.

He was a stray waif from one of our great cities,—such a one as can only be found there; had never known either parents or home, but “just growed,” and struggled to get a living out of the world the best way he could, until a recruiting-officer came along, who wanted very much one more name to complete his number, and added his.

“Have you seen ‘Our baby’ yet?” asked a nurse, as I came out of the ward that night. He was christened “Our baby” by all in his ward. I never knew another name for him. They moved him to a cot near the stove, and nurses and convalescents petted and nursed him, and for a time he grew better under their care.

Our hospitals were very full then, and death was busy in every ward: so I spent my strength with those I knew must soon die, and gave “Our baby” only a few passing words, waiting until I could have more time to spend with him. He was getting so much better, I thought, and he

needed so much instruction. He could neither read nor write; knew little more of God than a heathen child; had scarcely heard the name of Christ, save when linked with an oath. I should have to begin with the very rudiments of saving truth. And so I waited for a more convenient season, giving him my brightest-covered little tracts (he liked those best), for his comrades to read to him, and resting myself when I came home at night by putting together all the old engravings I could find into picture-books for his amusement. At last a day came when I thought I could give him an hour; but when I stood beside his cot he had gone beyond my reach! I thought at first he was asleep; but no: he was dying! I bent close to his ear and tried to make him hear me; but not a muscle of that still face moved. Sight or sound of earth could never reach him more.

Dear reader, pray that you may never *know* how I felt as I held that little, cold hand in mine. God had sent this untaught wanderer to me that I might teach him the way of life, and, instead of doing that, I had amused him,

and petted him, and let the precious hours pass by, and now he had gone from me until I should meet him in the judgment!

They gave him a soldier's burial; every comrade who was able to walk followed him to the grave, and they laid "Our baby" in it with all the "honours of war." In that quiet graveyard, on the hill, there is one mound, shorter than its kindred hundreds, on which I do not care to look; because I know that when it opens on that last day a little accusing face will rise to meet me with its story, in the presence of my Judge.

That is the only face lying there, I trust, that I need dread to see. Whenever I have been tempted to postpone a duty, or help one of my men "to pass the time" before he had "redeemed it,"¹ "Our baby's" face would come before me, and prevent it.

Parent, Sabbath-school teacher, Christian worker, are you letting any such "accusing faces" go from your side to meet you in the judgment?

¹ Eph. 5 : 16.

Dear reader, in whatever position God has placed you, what witness will those who meet your eye each day bear at that judgment-seat for you? If you have no "accusing face" awaiting you now, do not send one there!

Not only to the prophet, but to *all* to whom He has given opportunity and influence, God speaks:—

"When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die, and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand.

"'Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul.'"¹

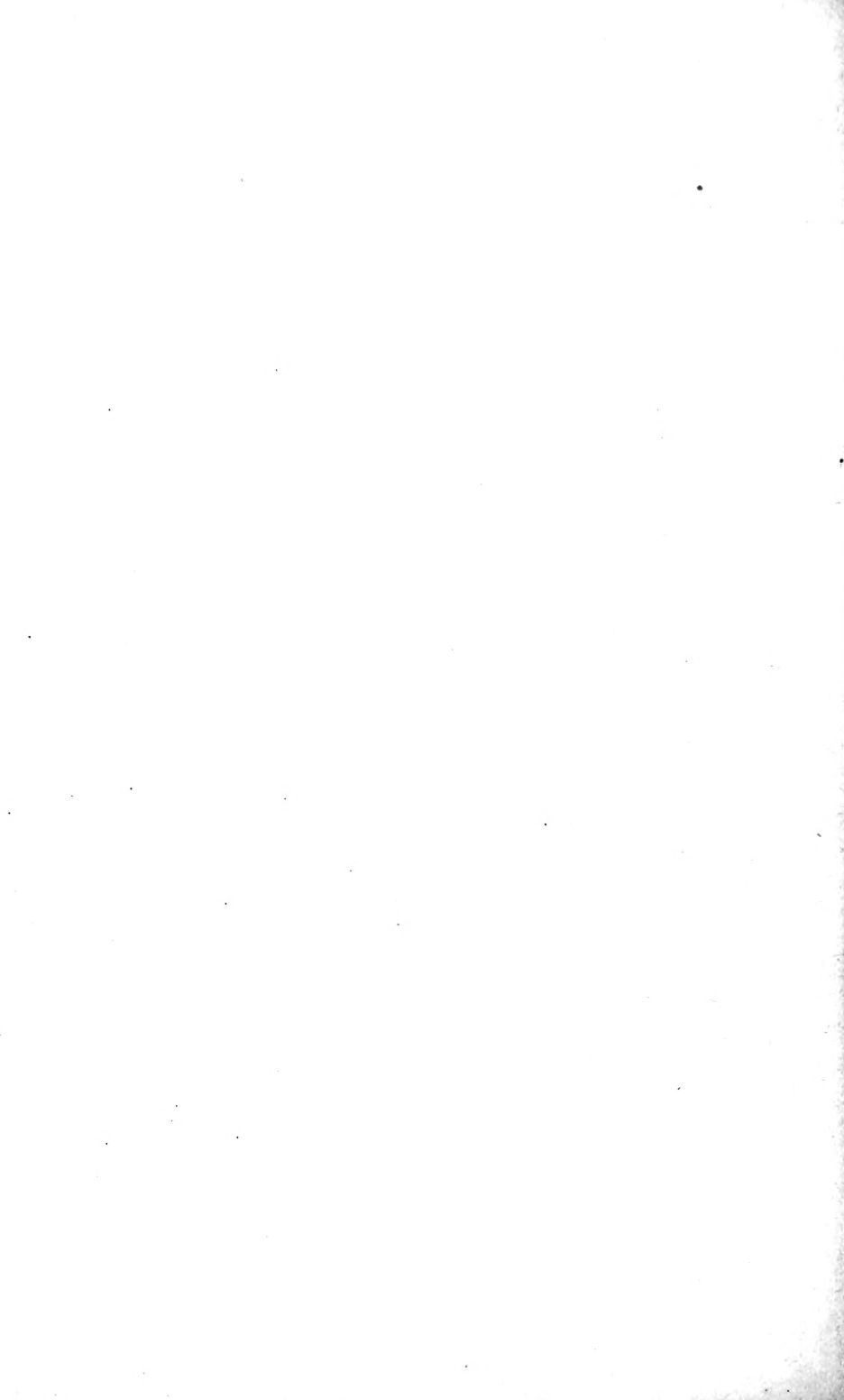
Not only to the minister, but to *all* upon whose ear the gospel-message falls, the Saviour says, "Let him that heareth say, Come."²

"To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."³

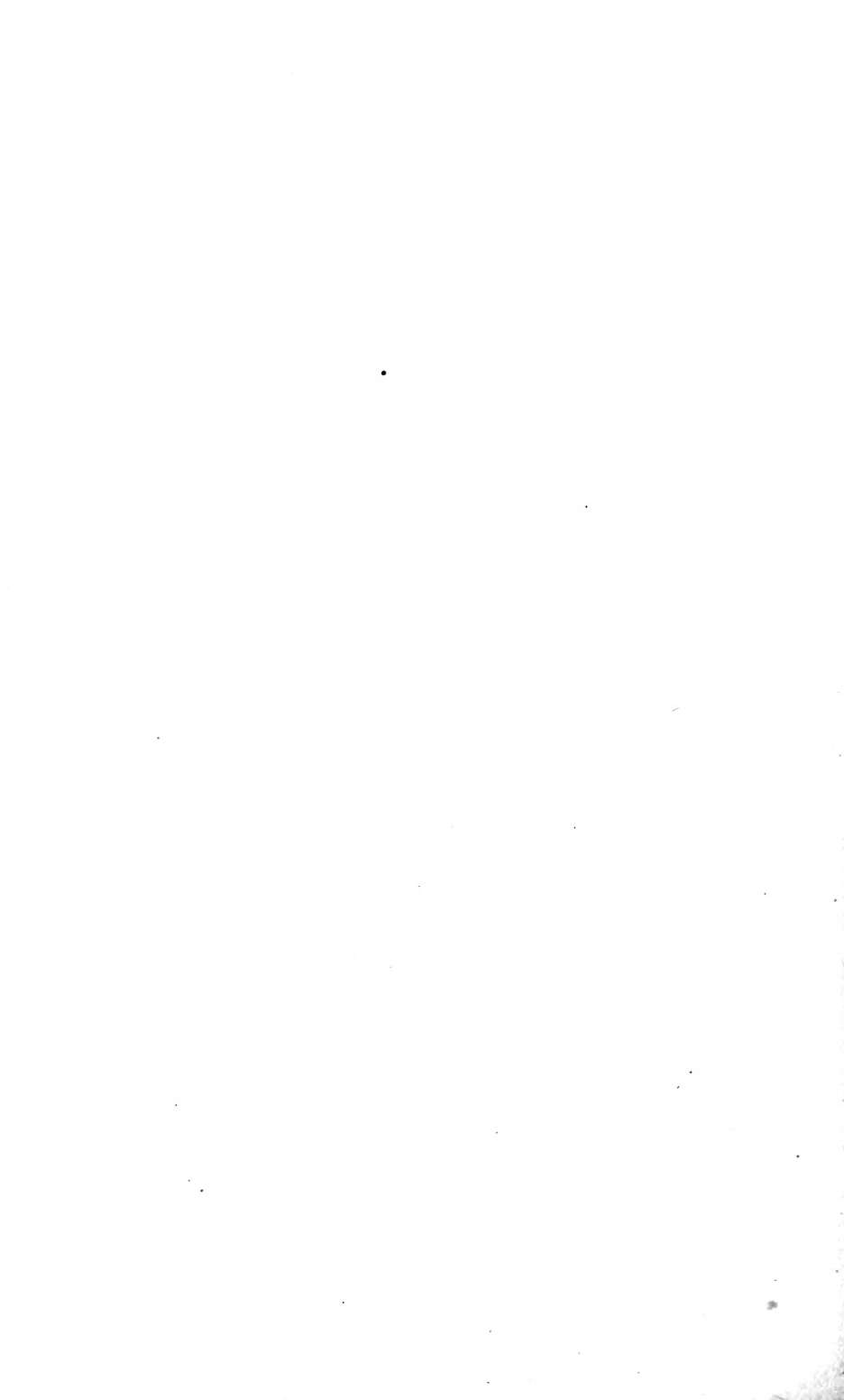
¹ Ezek. 3 : 17-22.

² Rev. 22 : 17.

³ James 4 : 17.



HEAVEN.



HEAVEN.

“Do you know that I scarcely ever think of *heaven?*”

“I hope that I am a Christian. I know that I love God; but I keep thinking more about what I can do for Him here, than about going to heaven when I die.”

I was sitting beside a sick soldier, that day, talking about heaven, and Him who lives there; and one after another of the convalescents, walking around through the ward, had stopped to listen and to join in the conversation, as usual, and had seated themselves on the empty cots near us, until there were no more vacant places; while the youngest of them all, a little drummer-boy, was sitting on the floor at my feet, leaning against one of the men, and listen-

ing with such a contented look on his pale, thin face.

What delightful little "Bethels" we used to have in the wards, so often! I love to think of them yet; and I think that the memory of them lingers in more than one heart above ground to-day, while many who helped to make them have passed to the "House of God" above.

At such times Christians and those who were not would talk together, in low tones, about Jesus, and about their own souls, speaking so freely of their own thoughts and feelings.

I used to wonder at their doing so, sometimes; but I knew that it was caused by the presence of Him who has promised that "where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I;"¹ and His Spirit had opened their hearts.

The last speaker was a middle-aged man, who I had every reason to think was a Christian. He had been in the hospital for months, working quietly and earnestly for Christ among his comrades in the wards, when he was able; was then the leader in the soldiers' nightly

¹ Matt. 18 : 20.

prayer-meeting, and foremost among them all in every good word and work.

I think I have never met more devoted, earnest, working Christians than among the soldiers in the hospitals. Nothing but the "love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit,"¹ was strong enough to keep a man faithful to his God through the temptations of the army; and those who possessed that, had a heart to work for Him, too.

How much work has been done for the Master by Christian soldiers among their comrades will only be known when the "books are opened,"² as they stand among those who are "disciples indeed."³

"Yes: it is pleasant to work for God, brother," I said to this one. "There is nothing pleasanter in the world, outside of the love of Christ in the heart; but the 'rest'⁴ that 'remaineth' to those who love and work for God, is 'far better.'⁵

"Don't you remember, after a hard day's

¹ Rom. 5 : 5.

² Rev. 20 : 12.

³ John 8 : 31.

⁴ Heb. 4 : 9.

⁵ Phil. 1 : 23.

work, when you were at home, how you used to enjoy resting yourself when it was ended? Or, after a hard day's march through the heat and dust, how happy you used to feel when you stopped for the night, and you threw down your blanket on the cool grass, and stretched your weary limbs upon it, and lay and looked up at the stars?

"Why, it used to rest you, sometimes, as you marched, even to think about doing so; and sometimes, when you were almost ready to faint by the way, the thought of it would give you new strength. You would think, 'It is only a little way now, and then I can take my rest.'"

"Yes, indeed: I do remember it well."

"When we are *tired*, heaven seems like a place to *rest* in; when we are in trouble, it seems like a place where there is no more sorrow; when we are sick, it is a place where there is no more pain. There are no hospitals there. The inhabitants never say, 'I am sick.'¹

"No more wounded men in that country,

¹ Isa. 33 : 24.

brother," I said, as one of the men came up, and stood leaning upon his crutches for a moment, and then one, who was sitting on a cot, gave him his place, and stood leaning against the iron loop at the foot of the bed. "Won't that be pleasant?"

"Yes, indeed it will;" and his eyes grew brighter at the thought.

"When we look around such a place as this, heaven seems like a country where there is no more war.¹ When our friends die, it is a place where there is 'no more death.' No more heart-aches there, as we say the last good-by to those we love. 'Good-by' is never heard in all that happy land. Those we love will live with us forever."

"Heaven always seemed more *real* to me after mother died," said the pale-faced boy on the floor. "It was that which first set me to thinking."

"I have two little children there, I hope," said another soldier; "and yet, when I think about heaven, it seems like when you *dream* of

¹ Isa. 2 : 4.

a place. I know that it is there; and yet it don't seem a *real place* to me,—not as this world does.”

“One reason of that is because we don't *think* of it enough. Do you know any thing about the island of Sardinia?”

“Not very much.”

“You believe that there is such a place?”

“Oh, yes: I have seen it on the map.”

“Do you know any thing about California?”

“Oh, yes: I had strong thoughts of going there, once.”

“What did you do when you thought of going there? I mean, what did you try to find out first?”

“Well, I tried to find out what the prospects would be, if I should go; and I used to read descriptions of the country, and how the people lived, and all about it; and if I saw any thing about it in the newspapers, I used to be more interested in that than any thing else. Why, I was so much in the notion, for a while, that I could scarcely think about any thing else.”

“What is the difference now, when you

think of California, and when you think about Sardinia?"

"Well, California seems a great deal more real to me, because I know more about it. And, then, I have friends living there, that I get letters from. One of them came home on a visit, and I used to hear him talk about it a great deal: it was that which first put me in the notion of going there."

"Now, the more we read and think about heaven, the more real it seems to us.

The more we talk and study about it, and the more we think about those who live there, and think about our going there some day, the more 'home-like' it will seem to us."

"But, then, we can't know about heaven as we could about any place in this world, because no one ever came back from it to tell us about it."

"One, who lived in heaven from all eternity, came down, and spent thirty-three years in this world once.

"He told us a little about it, when He lived here; and then, when He went back, He sent

us letters (in the Bible), telling us more about it,—all that He thought best for us to know.

“We can know a great deal better about heaven than we can about any place in this world that we have not seen; because our friends or travellers might deceive us, but for this we have the word of One who cannot lie.”¹

“You know,” said another, “that some say that heaven is all around us; that there is no such world. I mean, a real world like this. Do you think there is?”

“Yes; I do. *Where* that ‘centre and metropolis of the universe’—as some one calls it—is, God has not seen fit to tell us; and it is only a vain curiosity that seeks to be wise ‘above what is written.’²

“One writer (Dick) supposes it to be the central sun around which all other worlds revolve; and he reasons that it must be at least five hundred times (I think) larger than all the rest of the universe put together.

“It is grand to *try* to take in such a thought,—God, ‘*Our Father* in heaven,’ seated upon His

¹ Heb. 6 : 18.

² 1 Cor. 4 : 6.

throne, in the *centre* of all His works, overlooking and guiding and ruling all the universe of His creation. But we know He *does rule* it; and that is enough for us to know.¹ No one can tell any thing more about *where* heaven is, or what it is like, than what God has chosen to tell us in the Bible.

“But we know that it must be a *place*, because the Bible says so.² And, besides, there are three *bodies* in it *now*.

“Christ took His human body back to heaven with Him, you know;³ and wherever Jesus is, is heaven. God took Enoch’s⁴ body and Elijah’s⁵ body into heaven, too, you remember. Christ promised, when He lived upon the earth, to come for us, and take us to Himself, that where He is there we might be also;⁶ and He has promised to raise our bodies⁷ and take those who love Him into heaven.⁸

¹ Deut. 29 : 29.

² John 14 : 2. 2 Cor. 5 : 1. Heb. 11 : 10.

³ Luke 24 : 50, 51. 1 Pet. 3 : 22.

⁴ Gen. 5 : 24. Heb. 11 : 5.

⁵ 2 Kings 2 : 11.

⁶ John 14 : 3. Luke 23 : 43.

⁷ John 5 : 28, 29.

⁸ Matt. 25 : 34. 1 John 3 : 2.

“God has told us more about what *kind* of a place it is; given us stray glimpses of it, scattered here and there through the Bible. Let us try to put some of those glimpses together, now, and see what we can learn about it,” I said, taking a large Bible from the stand near me.

“You must help me to think what we shall find when we go there.

“‘And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.’¹ That is one reason why I want to see the ocean while I am in this world. There is no sea in heaven.

“Let us put together what is *not* in that world, first.

“There will be no churches in it; ‘for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.’²

“We shall have no prayer-meetings there. We will have no need to pray any more; for we shall have all that we desire, and will only have

¹ Rev. 21 : 1.

² Rev. 21 : 22.

to praise God for having given us Jesus, and, through Him, having given us all things.¹

“‘There shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain.’²

“‘And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it.’³ We must say good-by to sun and moon and stars, here; we will never see them in heaven, ‘for there shall be no night there;’⁴ and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; ‘for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.’⁵

“‘And there shall be no more curse.’⁶ ‘And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie;’⁷ but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life.’

“‘They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.’⁸ And God shall wipe away all

¹ 1 Pet. 1 : 3, 4. Rev. 7 : 9, 10.

² Rev. 21 : 4.

³ Rev. 21 : 23.

⁴ Rev. 22 : 5.

⁵ Rev. 21 : 23.

⁶ Rev. 21 : 3.

⁷ Rev. 21 : 27.

⁸ Rev. 7 : 16.

tears from their eyes ;'¹ 'and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.'²

"Now, let us see what kind of a place even *this world* would be, if all that was taken out of it; or, we will take part of this world only. Suppose that it was the *next State*.

"Suppose that the moment after you crossed the line into the next State, you were forever free from the fear of *death*. If you were only on the other side of the line, you would *never die*. I think that some of these friends would feel like starting for that country to-night."

"Yes, indeed," said more than one voice.

"Suppose that, as soon as you crossed the line, *sickness* and *pain* would leave you in a moment, and you would never feel them again. I think that some here who have a little strength would try to use it to reach that happy land; and those who are too weak would plead with the others to try to take them; and even this friend with the crutches would use them in trying to walk there, if there was no other way for him to reach it."

¹ Rev. 7 : 18, 19.

² Isa. 35 : 10.

“I would make a very strong effort, at least.”

“Suppose that, as soon as we crossed the line, we not only should never die, or ever feel pain, or sickness, or *hunger*, or *thirst*, or *cold*, or *heat*, but we should be forever free from *fear* and *care* and *trouble* of every kind. I think we should not feel like turning back, even if we were weary and the road was rough. We should think no pain or trouble on the way too great, if we could only reach it.

“If you had every thing that your heart could wish for in this world, would you be happy, friend?”

“I should think I ought to be.”

“Now, suppose that, as soon as we crossed the line, we should not only have every thing that we *did not* want taken from us, but we would have every thing that we *did* want given to us,—every desire of our hearts gratified, so that there would not be the very least thing left for us to wish for, even, and we should live forever with One whom we loved better than all the world beside.

“As soon as we crossed the line, we should not only have every care and trouble taken away

from us, but we should have our hearts filled full, to overflowing, with the purest, sweetest, richest *pleasure*. The happiest moment of our lives here could scarcely give us the least idea of it. And that happiness, instead of growing any less, should grow stronger and brighter through a long eternity.¹ Wouldn't that be a place worth struggling to reach, through all kinds of difficulties, for a lifetime?"

"Yes, indeed: it would more than repay us for them all, after we got there."

"How little we would think of the darkness and the pain and the weariness we should find on the road!

"We should keep thinking, 'It won't last long: only a little distance further, and I shall be forever free from them all.'"

"Only a little while!" murmured the sick boy on the cot; and I knew of what he was thinking, as he closed his eyes.

"What pains we should take to be sure that we were on the *right road*! How much we should be afraid of missing the way! How

¹ 1 Pet. 1 : 18. Prov. 4 : 18.

closely we would study the 'Guide-book'! And if one who had opened up the road and travelled over it before us had promised to guide us and help us,¹ how *near* we should try to keep to him, for fear that we should lose our way, after all!

"*Now, there is just such a world as that waiting for those who love Jesus; only we cannot even imagine how infinitely better it is than any thing we can think of or describe; for 'eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for those that love Him.'*"²

"And that place is large enough to hold the whole world; and the gates of it are always open,³ so that any one who comes to them can enter in. And the King says to us,⁴ 'The Spirit and the Bride say, *Come*; and whosoever will, let him' *come*; and 'him that cometh' 'I will in no wise cast out.'⁵ And He says, too, 'Let him that *heareth say, Come.*'

¹ Psalm 16 : 11. Psalm 32 : 8. Matt. 28 : 20.

² 1 Cor. 2 : 9. Isa. 64 : 4.

³ Rev. 21 : 25.

⁴ Rev. 22 : 17.

⁵ John 6 : 37.

“That is why I am here to-day : to say, ‘Come.’ I really do *believe* in *heaven* ; and I do so much want every one of these soldier-friends to get into it.

“They have had a hard time of it here ; and, even if they were at home and had every thing that this world could give, *this life is not worth the experiment of living, unless there is heaven at the end of it* ; and we must start on the road that leads to heaven before we leave this world, or we can never reach it.

“God has told us who can *not* go in.¹ ‘Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?’

“All who do not love God,—all who are not washed from sin by the blood of Jesus,—all the wicked men who gave us so much trouble here,—shall not enter there.²

“No more Satan or sin to fight with, there ; no more temptations for us to strive against ; nothing that shall ‘hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord.’³

¹ 1 Cor. 6 : 9, 10.

² Gal. 5 : 15-22. Rev. 22 : 17. Rev. 21 : 27.

³ Isa. 65 : 25.

"But how can any one be *sure* of getting there?" asked one who was not a Christian.

"We have *God's word* for it, friend; and if we can't believe *that*, what *can* we believe? We have our 'orders' and our 'pass.' All that we need to be *sure* of is that we are in the way that He has opened up for us to it.

"'In my Father's house are many mansions,' Jesus said to His disciples, when He lived here.¹ 'I go to prepare a place for you.' And then He sent us a little description of what *kind* of a 'place' it was," I said, reading the twenty-first chapter, and to the seventh verse of the twenty-second chapter, of Revelation.

"We could not take in a correct idea of that glorious 'City,'² the 'New Jerusalem,' our '*home*,' if we should look upon that picture of it for a lifetime.

"Who are its inhabitants?"

"'I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with

¹ John 14 : 2.

² Heb. 11 : 10 16.

white robes, and palms in their hands.’¹ ‘And I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps.’²

“‘And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne,’ ‘and the elders.’³

“‘And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?

“‘And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest.

“‘And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.’⁴

“These were redeemed from among men, being the first-fruits unto God, and to the Lamb.’⁵

“We shall not only have the society of the angels who ministered to our happiness, without our knowing it, while we were here,⁶ but of all the good who have ever lived upon the earth. Among them we shall find those of our

¹ Rev. 7 : 9.

² Rev. 14 : 2.

³ Rev. 5 : 11.

⁴ Rev. 7 : 13, 14.

⁵ Rev. 14 : 4.

⁶ Heb. 1 : 14.

friends who loved God and went to Him, waiting for us.

“This little brother will find his mother there, when he goes into the City, if she was a Christian.”

“Do you think I will *know* her?” And his blue eyes were misty as he asked the question.

“I think you will. I do not think that we will lose our identity there.

“Paul speaks¹ of expecting to *know* some that he knew on earth. He looks forward to meeting those whom he had been the means of converting to Christ, as his ‘crown of rejoicing’ in the presence of the Saviour.²

“Jesus speaks³ of the redeemed from all nations, sitting down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.

“There is nothing in the Bible to lead out the idea that we shall *not* know our friends there; and it is a great deal *pleasanter* to think that we *will*.

¹ 2 Cor. 1 : 14.

² 1 Thess. 2 : 19. Phil. 4 : 1. Phil. 2 : 16.

³ Matt. 8 : 11. Luke 13 : 28, 29.

“ *Won’t* it be pleasant to meet those we loved and lost down here, and spend an eternity with them in heaven ?”

“ Yes, indeed it will.”

“ But what if some that we loved are *not* there ?” asked another. “ Don’t you think that that will make us feel badly ?”

“ I don’t think that we *can* feel sorrow for *any thing* there, friend. ‘ God shall wipe away *all* tears,’ you know.

“ Sin was the cause of all our trouble down here; and when we are purified from that, all our liability to be made sorrowful will cease.

“ You know, too, that even here, when the heart is full of love to God, troubles fall a great deal more lightly on it. The blessed ‘ Comforter’¹ takes away their power. And there we shall be in the *presence* of that Comforter forever.²

“ ‘ The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and His servants shall serve Him.’³

“ You will still find something to *do* for God, brother. What it is, we will have to wait until

¹ John 15 : 26.

² John 14 : 16.

³ Rev. 22 : 3.

we get there to learn; but it will be a work that will not weary us, we know.¹

“One thing is worshipping and praising God.²

“Don’t you remember how happy you have felt, sometimes, when you were worshipping God among His children on earth? How your heart went out to Him in love and joy?

“Our hearts will be altogether freed from sin there, and *filled* with the love³ and the *presence* of God; for there ‘The tabernacle of God is with men, and He shall dwell with them, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God;’⁴ and in His ‘presence’ there is ‘fulness of joy,’ and at His ‘right hand there are pleasures for evermore.’⁵

“And here we must stop. Our strongest thought cannot give even the most distant idea of the joy which that *visible presence* of God, our Father in heaven, the dear Redeemer, and the Comforter, will bring to us.

“We can imagine, faintly, the blissfulness of

¹ Heb. 4 : 9.

² Rev. 15 : 3, 4.

³ Eph. 3 : 19. Eph. 1 23.

⁴ Rev. 21 : 3.

⁵ Psalm 16 : 11.

that state in which we shall be forever free from sin and suffering of every kind, and shall enjoy the blessed society of heaven through an eternity; but these are only the ‘pleasures which are at the right hand of God.’

“You have seen men looking through a coloured glass at the sun.

“They could not look at its brightness with the naked eye: its rays would blind them.

“So on earth we can only *see* God as ‘through a glass, darkly.’¹ We can know so little of Him, except through a medium; and if even here, when our hearts are filled with the love of God in Christ, ‘in whom, though now we see Him not, yet believing’ we are made to ‘rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory,’² how *infinitely greater* will the happiness be when ‘we shall see *Him face to face*’!

“As we *now* are, no man can look on God and live;³ the brightness of His glory would strike him dead; but before we come into His presence in heaven, we shall be *changed* to suit

¹ 1 Cor. 13 : 12.

² 1 Pet. 1 : 8.

³ Exodus 33 : 20.

His glory,¹—changed, so that that presence and glory will be our highest enjoyment, beside which every other joy will seem faint and dim.

“We do not know what the *nature* of that *change* in us will be; we cannot understand it now; it is a mystery² that we cannot know until we feel it; for ‘it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when God’ in Christ ‘appears’ to us, ‘we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is,’³ and find our highest heaven in Him.

“Oh, what a presence and what a home that will be to spend forever in! Is it not strange that every one does not seek it above their chief good?

“How can any one help trying to gain heaven? Don’t you think that the angels must look down in wonder as they see men turn from it for the sake of a few short years of (so-called) pleasure, which never yet has satisfied them, and never will,—see them have such a weary, restless time on earth, and then lose heaven too!

“We do not really *believe* in heaven as we

¹ Rom. 8 : 29.

² 1 Cor. 15 : 51-54.

³ 1 John 3 : 2.

should, or we should look forward to it more, and be more earnest not only in trying to win it for ourselves, but in persuading others to seek it too.

“Parents would try more earnestly to lead the little feet that God has given them to guide, into the ‘way’¹ that leads there, as soon as they were able to walk in it.

“How earnestly we would plead with those we love, to go with us! How we would delight to help them on the way! And even strangers, as they met, would talk about, and point each other to, that ‘heavenly City,’ and plead with sinners to turn and enter with them into the ‘joy of their Lord.’”²

It was pleasant to talk of heaven with those who had just started on the road to it, or those who might have years of travel yet; but it was pleasanter far to talk about it with one who was *almost there*.

It may seem strange, but some of the happiest hours of my life have been passed by the

¹ John 14 : 6. Mark 10 : 14. Prov. 22 : 6.

² Matt. 25 : 21, 23.

bedside of the dying Christian, as we read and talked about what was awaiting him in glory.

It brought heaven *very near*, and made it seem *very real*, to talk about it with one who would be walking through the streets of the "golden City"¹ in a few hours, or, it might be, moments.

"The *Lamb* was the *light* of it," to their souls, even more than to the convalescents; lighting up the dark valley² while they were passing through it; the central point of the attractions beyond.

"Precious Jesus!" "Blessed Saviour!" "*My* Jesus!" "I will soon see Him!"—"soon be where He is!" And the light would spring into their eyes at the thought that He was waiting for them on the "other side," and when their eyes closed on this world they would open them *first* on *Him*,—safe in the shelter of His arms.³

At such times that dear Redeemer seemed very near,—so near that I could almost *feel* His presence, although He had not come for me.

¹ Rev. 21 : 18, 21.

² Psalm 23 : 4.

³ John 14 : 3.

Blessed religion of Jesus, that gives such comfort when all other comforts fail!

Blessed hope, which grows stronger and brighter when all other hopes have passed away!

How many times I have thought, "O Death, *where* is thy sting? O grave, *where* is thy victory?"¹ as I watched my soldier-boys pass, joyfully and triumphantly, from the sound of my voice, to listen to the music of the harps around the throne!

How many times I have seen *manifested* the *infinite love* and *wisdom* which devised such a plan of salvation for ruined, guilty man!

No other plan could have been so suited to the wants of all,—suited to the poor and the rich, the high and the lowly, the learned and the ignorant, the wise and the simple, the strong and the weak, the sick and the convalescent.

What other "plan" could you have carried to the sick and dying men?

"Do good works"? They were not able.
"Do penance"? They had not the strength.

¹ 1 Cor. 15 : 55.

“Trust in ordinances”? They could not have them there.

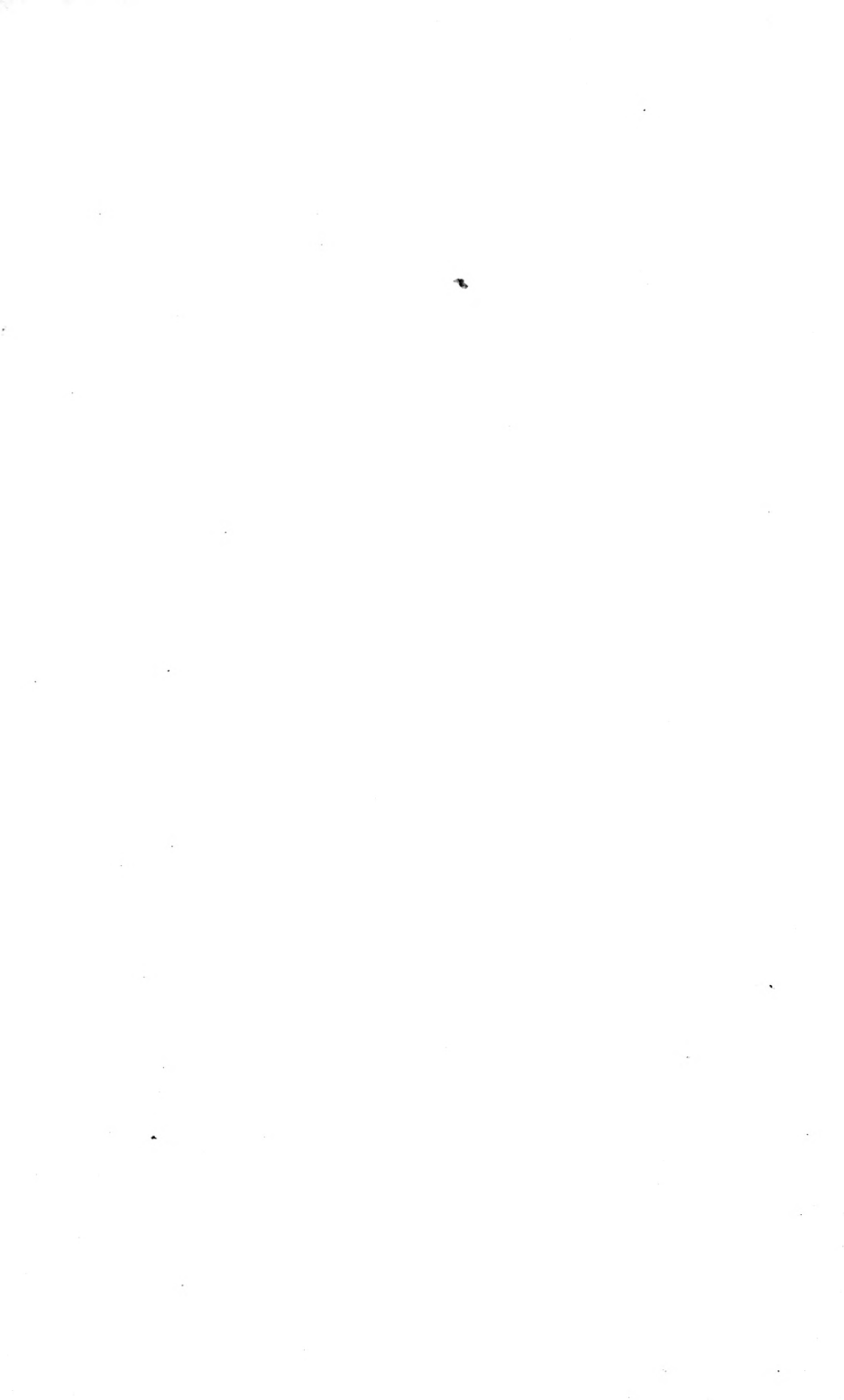
But none were too weak to “look to Jesus.”

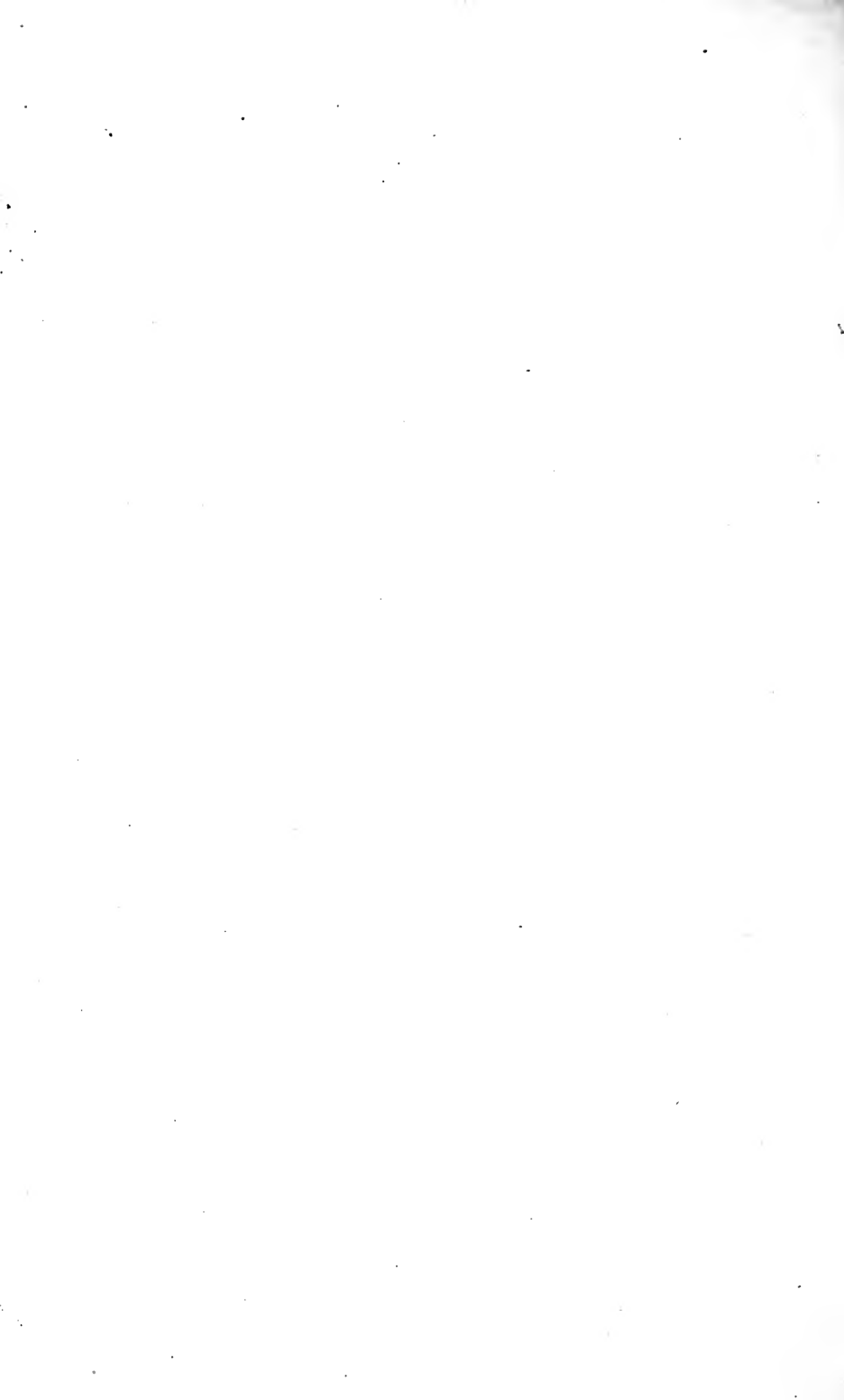
“Believe on the Lord Jesus.” “Give yourself to Him. Trust Him, and *He* will take you into heaven.”

Precious Jesus! Dear Redeemer! to open up such a “way” for poor, lost sinners to the New Jerusalem,—our *Home*!

*“Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have a right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.”*¹

¹ Rev. 22 : 14.





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